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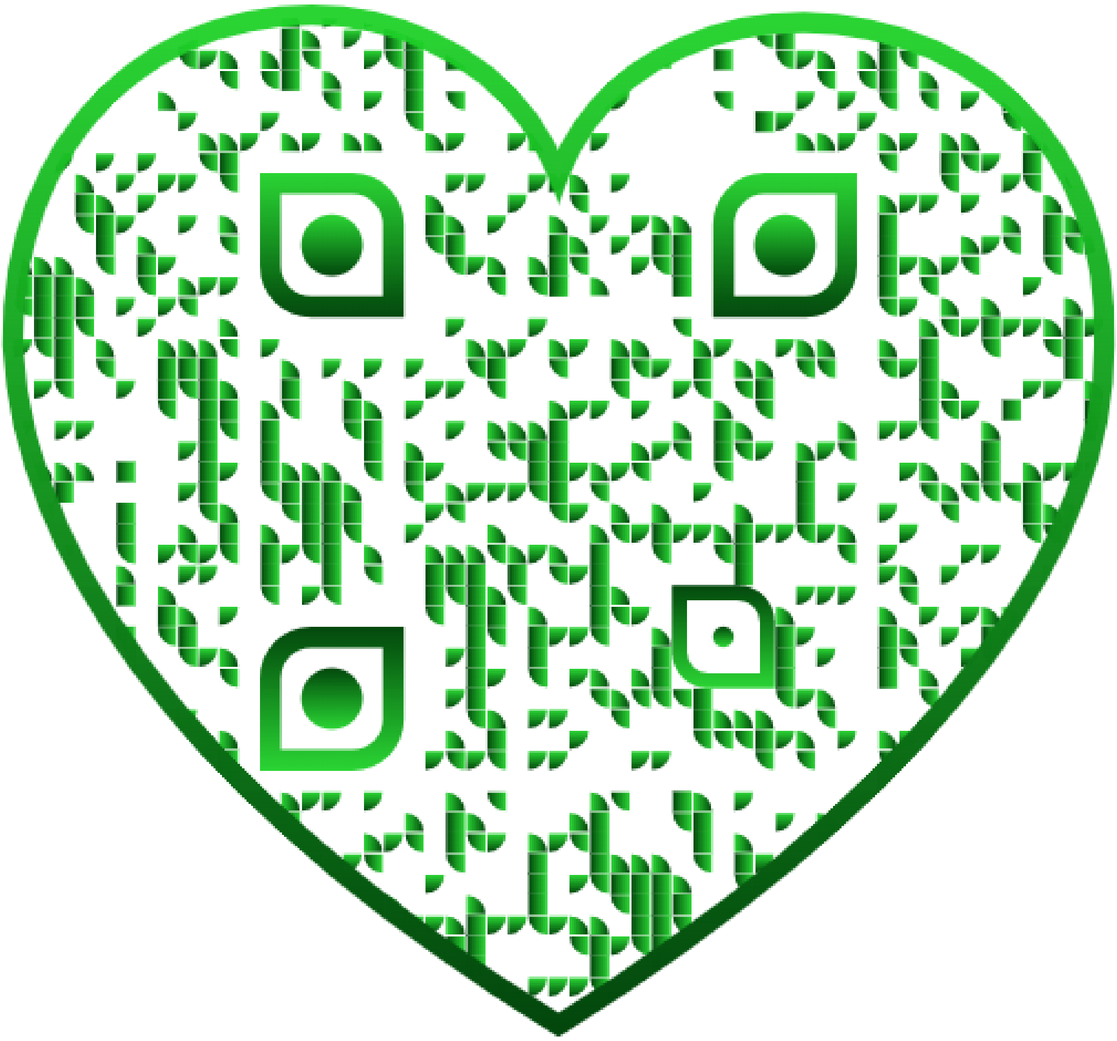

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EDITORIAL

A HAT TIP TO STEED

If you are ever flicking through the TV channels late at night, then there's a good chance that you'll find an episode or two of a classic 1960s series such as Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased), The Saint or The Avengers. And if you do chance across The Avengers, then it's more likely to be a Diana Rigg or Linda Thorson episode, as opposed to the earlier ones featuring Honor Blackman or Ian Hendry.

There are several reasons why that first series of The Avengers, starring Hendry as Dr David Keel, are rarely shown. Only three episodes (and the first act of debut episode Hot Snow) are known to exist in the archives; it was shot as live in the studio on black and white video tape, coming across more as a play than the glossy action-adventure series we know and love; and opposed to the usual spy-fi tropes of evil geniuses with nefarious schemes, that first series has the feel of a plodding police procedural.

I do wonder if The Avengers could have enjoyed the status it does had Ian Hendry stayed on for another series. But by chucking the raincoat and starting to dress like a retired guards officer, Patrick Macnee created a strong look that made him a perfect leading man in waiting.

Rewatching what does survive of the first series, it's painfully obvious that despite Hendry's sadly wasted talent, Macnee is the best thing about it. His absence is noticed from what survives of the first episode (he turns up later in the missing section) and the earliest full episode, Girl on a Trapeze, in which he doesn't appear at all.

By the next surviving episode, The Frighteners, the carnation and umbrella are there, even if he does wear a trilby instead of a bowler hat. And, yes, Steed does get to end the episode celebrating cracking the case over a glass of something with a female companion, even if that drinking partner was On the Buses' Doris Hare.

But the beginnings of The Avengers as we know it are there, and we have Patrick Macnee to thank for that.

Simon Stabler

GETTING DOWN WITH THE DRUIDS

Cardinal Cox uncovers a few not so ancient traditions

High summer is upon us and time to keep an eye open for evidence of druids in your local spinney or thicket. These shy creatures, while harmless, can prove to be very useful. Council wants to cut down an oak tree? Call in a druid. Government wants to plough some infrastructure through the countryside? Better organise an eisteddfod.

My local druids are a pleasant bunch who claim to be part of an ancient tradition and, indeed, photographs were reprinted in a local newspaper of people holding a banner that proclaimed themselves to be druids, but that was around a century ago. My guess is that they were probably members of the United Ancient Order of Druids. That was a mutual and friendly society much like the RAOB or Oddfellows, and so did important work in their own community (much as druids might have done before the Roman conquest, but with less human sacrifices, hopefully).

It was also around this time in the 1930s that Lady Raglan conflated a couple of earlier traditions and effectively created the folklore of the Green Man. I would suggest that after 90 years, a tradition is as much a tradition as any other.

In that spirit, the druids have embraced the fact that Georgian priest and antiquarian William Stukeley was a vicar in a local town, while spending his spare time creating links for ancient druids at Stonehenge and Avebury.

The same town was childhood home to Lady Charlotte Guest who (to spite her stepfather) ensured that the tutor employed to educate her dullard brothers actually taught her. When she married an industrialist from Glamorgan, she took it upon herself to learn Welsh and then supervised the translation of medieval tales that formed the Mabinogion – a collection of the earliest Welsh prose stories.

Tradition, as I have suggested, need not be ancient. The same town has a tucked-away memorial bench to Boudicca (erected in the 1960s) that is both accessible and far enough from houses to not disturb the neighbours if people want to mark midsummer dawn there. My own city includes a stone circle erected in the middle of a housing estate 20 years ago, so not so secluded.

And this is all without roping in the legacy of Peterborough-born and raised actor and author David Pinner whose 1967 novel Ritual was (in slight part) inspiration for the film The Wicker Man… perhaps, though, that's a tradition we don't need to embrace, as much as the revived Whittlesea Straw Bear Festival might lend itself to such things.

Next issue: Spangles

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PAST AND PRESENT

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Postbag

The Editor welcomes letters for this section. Pictures are appreciated. Letters may be edited so that we can include as many as possible

It's Astounding…

Dear Simon,

I cannot tell you how happy it made me to see an image from The Rocky Horror Picture Show, my favourite film of all time, proudly adorning the cover of your May issue.

Not only have I been passionately following The Rocky Horror Show and The Rocky Horror Picture Show since my teenage years in the mid-1980s, seeing both the stage and screen incarnations many hundreds of times, but I obsessively collect any and all Rocky Horror merchandise and memorabilia, so any publication which uses my favourite obsession (thank you, Dr Frank-n-Furter) as its cover story will always get a treasured place in my beloved collection.

Since childhood, I have loved classic (and, sometimes, not-so-classic) science fiction and monster movies – the original King Kong, The Day The Earth Stood Still, Tarantula and Night of the Demon were favourites from a very young age – as well as the Hammer and Universal horror movies, 1950s rock'n'roll music, 1970s glam rock, and saucy British (Carry On style) humour, so imagine how my adolescent mind was blown upon discovering a fun, camp, rock musical which cleverly satirised and paid homage to all of these things.

When I first saw the show at the Theatre Royal Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, in 1985, its opening song, Science Fiction/Double Feature, seemed to speak to me personally like no song I'd ever heard before.

My unwavering passion for Rocky Horror resulted in the book Still the Beast is Feeding: Fifty Years of Rocky Horror (written with my friend Phil Barden), published by Telos Publishing (telos.co.uk) in 2013 to commemorate the show's 40th anniversary, with a revised and updated edition published in 2023 for its 50th. The feeling of seeing my own book take its place on the shelf next to my extensive collection of other Rocky Horror-related publications was quite an emotional experience.

Little Nell, Patricia Quinn, Tim Curry and Richard O'Brien in the The Rocky Horror Picture Show, which was released in 1975.

Photograph: Moviestore/Shutterstock

With the 1975 film celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2025 (a milestone the stage version reached two years ago), I was hoping that someone would give it its moment to shine – especially as the 50th anniversary of Steven Spielberg's Jaws (also happening this year) is likely to overshadow it – so it brought me great joy to see Tim Curry's Dr Frank-n-Furter, Patricia Quinn's Magenta and Little Nell's Columbia in all their glory on the cover of your latest issue.

Not only that, but the Rocky Horror article was supported by a separate interview with the fabulous Angela Bruce – herself one of The Rocky Horror Show's early cast members, and your own special memories of the Rocky Horror phenomenon (shared in your editorial) which were particularly relatable. All in all, a worthy celebration of Richard O'Brien's enduring cult masterpiece and a welcome addition to my collection. Thank you so much.

Rob Bagnall
Leek, Staffordshire

'But Not As We Know It'

Dear Simon,

I was thinking about the game of football and how over the years it has changed. When I was at school, the full-backs were told not to go over the halfway line and to stay in their own half. But in the modern game they are in their opponents' half all the time.

Also, the boots are like trainers with studs on, and you can get any colour of boot you like. To get the game started these days, you can stand in the other team's half and kick the ball backwards. When a player scores, he runs over and kicks the corner flag down. Meanwhile, his teammates arrive and, before you know it, they are all on top of each other in a big heap. In my day, you might shake hands and that was that.

I did enjoy football when I was young but today you might say: "It's football but not as we know it."

Yours
Bobby Knottley
Newthorpe Common, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire

charles front

A Small World

Dear Simon,

My wife, Lesley, was searching through some costume jewellery and brooches etc a while ago, and came across some small earrings with what looked like a military shield as their design in silver and brass.

Through the wonders of an internet search, we cracked the nut, they are tiny miniatures of a US Navy officer's cap badge. Then the cogs started to churn, while serving in the Royal Australian Air Force, Lesley was a liaison officer working with the US Navy, dealing with American military personnel sent on R&R leave to Australia from Vietnam during the Vietnam War. The earrings must have been a wee "thank you" gift.

We both have strong links with the RAAF; I was seconded to them while serving with the RAF and, as we found out later, were both serving in Australia at the same time.

Sometimes, it can be a small world.

Alan Mudge
Pentney, King's Lynn, Norfolk

Think Bike

Dear Simon,

Readers may be interested to know that there is a free information service about older cycles available from Mr Scotford Lawrence, historian to the National Cycle Museum.

If you need help to identify a cycle, please attach a photo to an email and send to cycle.museum@care4free.net or by post to:

Scotford Lawrence
The National Cycle Museum
Automobile Palace
Temple Street
Llandrindod Wells
LD1 5DL

Mr Lawrence is unable to give valuations due to fluctuating prices. Many enquiries are about the history of various cycle makers in the past as well as wanting advice about restoration.

Kind regards

Freda Davies
National Cycle Museum
Llandrindod Wells, Powys

A Nice Class of Writer

Dear Simon,

I was thrilled to read Russell Cook's article on Simon Brett (A Nice Class of Corpse, April). I met Simon more than once when he came to Croydon Writers when I was secretary. He brought his books to sell, and I always bought one. The picture of him in the April issue shows him holding the same book I have. It's signed by Simon with the words: "To Maisie, with thanks for making me welcome in Croydon."

The book is A Fethering Mystery, The Hanging in the Hotel. I have read the other series, of course, and the Charles Paris series is my favourite. Simon was a great speaker and entertainer and is a marvellous writer, so thank you for bringing him to mind and reminding me of my days as secretary of Croydon Writers.

In May's Postbag, Bobby Knottley wrote about his memories of Surrey (Hog's Back to the Future). He mentioned St Martha's church in Guildford but said it was just on the Hog's Back so it might well be a different one to where my grandmother is buried in Albury, just outside Guildford. I remember as a child walking up a sandy path to it. Her name was Emma Middleton and she was 53 when she passed away in July 1919.

Her son Robert is mentioned on the grave. He died on 29 April 1917 and is buried at the Baghdad (North Gate) war cemetery. "Remembered with honour." My mother told me her mother never got over losing her son.

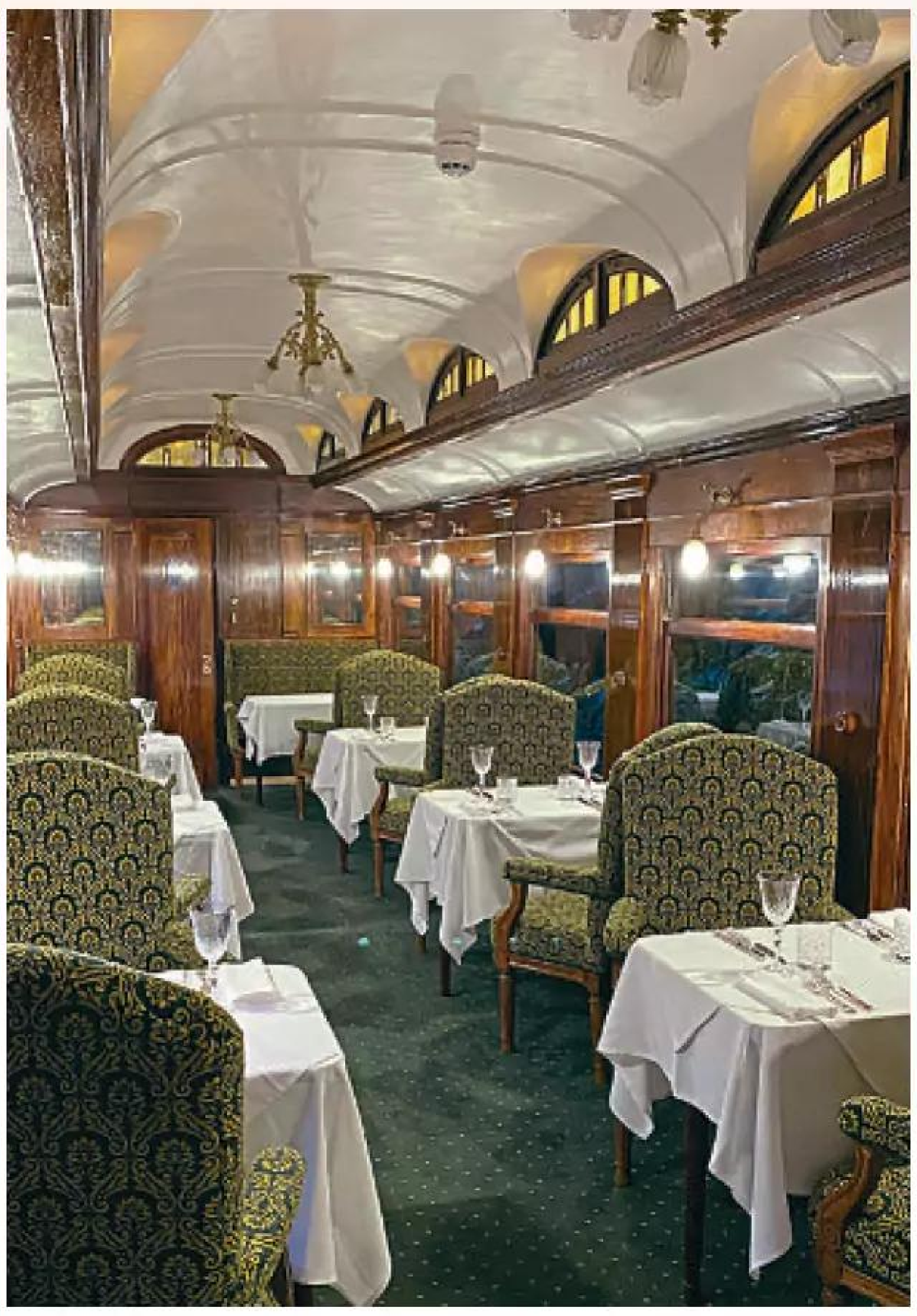
The inscription from her other children reads: "Dear Mother, rest, they work is o'er. They loving hands shall toil no more. Thy gentle eyes shall weep, rest, Dear Mother, gently sleep."

Thank you, Bobby, for the nudge to get out the papers relating to St Martha's.

Maisie Dance
Purley, Surrey

ON BRETT
The Hanging in the Hotel

Dining at a Standstill



Dear Simon,

Readers of the article Faster Food (Food and Drink, March), a preview of the book Dining at Speed by Chris de Winter Hebron, might like to know that the very same Devon Belle Pullman carriages Chris loved so much are still with us – and you can stay in them.

Several have been beautifully converted into luxury overnight accommodation at the Old Railway Station near Petworth (01798 342346, old-station.co.uk). Still on rails but going nowhere, sadly, this is a fantastic way to spend the night, and the restaurant in another Pullman carriage is outstanding. Highly recommended to train buffs and anyone looking for something different.

Regards

Paul Wood
Southampton, Hampshire

Extreme Bravery

Dear Simon,

Although I was always aware of the heroism displayed in war by my great-uncle Alexander MacLeod, I gulped when I opened an envelope sent to me by Fergie Munro of Ullapool. He informed me that he was sending me a drawing by war artist John McQueen Moyes, since I was now the oldest direct relative of Alexander and he felt I should have it.

The following is recorded in the battalion's official historical war accounts: "Fifteen Germans advanced and succeeded in getting close to a forward post now garrisoned by only Sergeant MacLeod and one other man. On June 23rd it was announced that decorations had been awarded and that the Distinguished Conduct Medal had been awarded to (newly promoted) Sergeant A MacLeod for Conspicuous Bravery. After a heavy bombardment the enemy sent over some reconnoitring parties but Sergeant MacLeod jumped the parapet and bombed them back to their wire, 160 yards. He set a fine example."

The signed drawing depicts him in action and says it all.

After the winter of 1916 and after Vimy Ridge, it was decreed that Hill 70 would be taken by the Royal Highlanders of Canada.

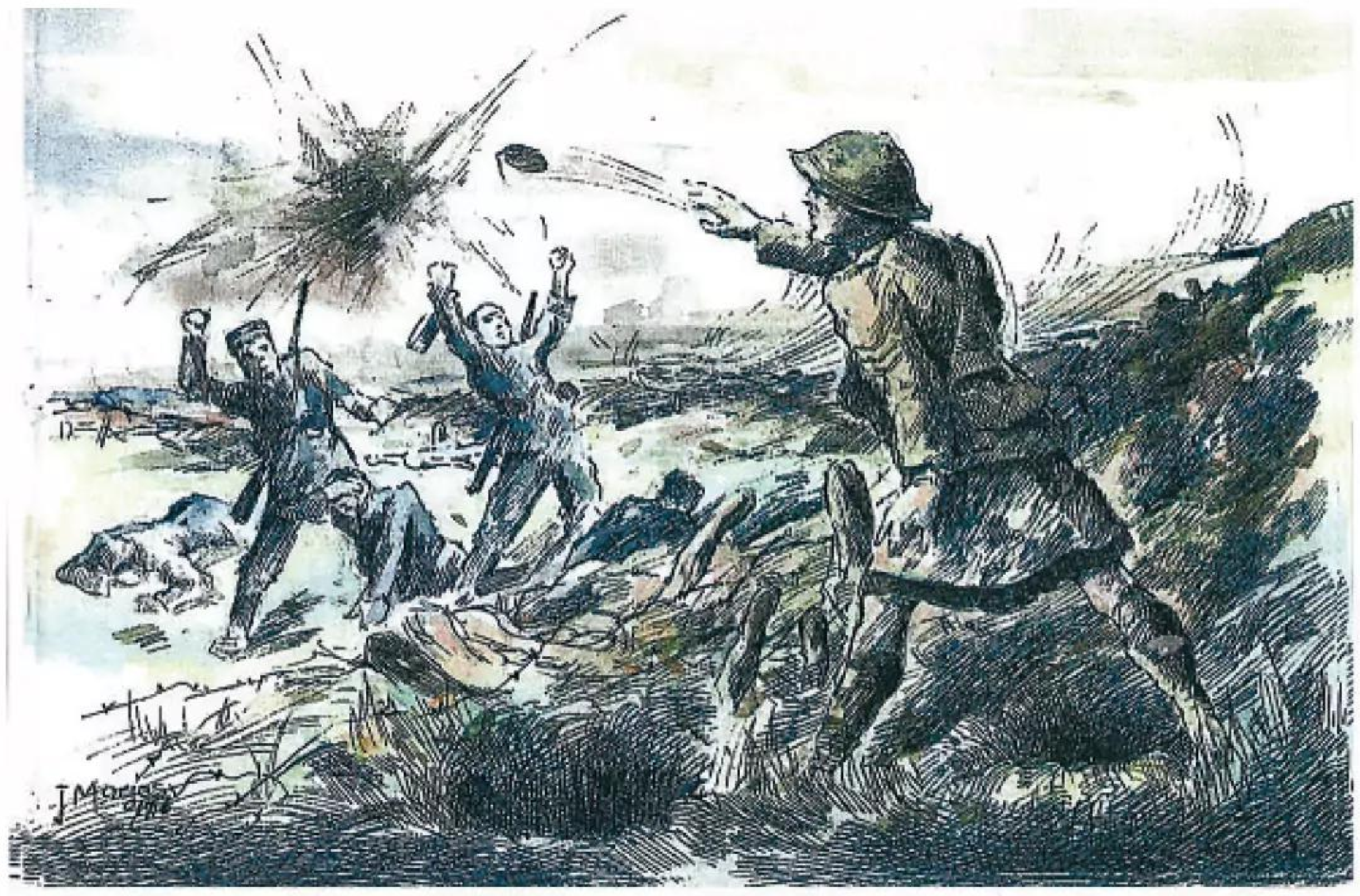
Meanwhile, after a severe bombardment, the Germans attacked and entered a trench close to a position that Alexander and some comrades had been holding. A flare suddenly lit up the sky revealing that advancing troops were wearing brassards (Red Cross caps). Doubting the genuineness of this, a grenade was thrown by a Russian who had joined in in their direction after a challenge made received a guttural and unconvincing reply.

The disguised Germans replied in kind but were driven back towards their own lines by Alexander and just a couple of others, who held firm until reinforcements arrived. For this, Alexander was awarded the Cross of St George (Russian, Third Class). He was in fact one of only 200 awarded this decoration who were not Russian by birth. It was awarded "in recognition of an extreme act of bravery in the face of the enemy."

Hill 70 was taken by the Royal Highlanders, where all others had failed before. However, the cost was huge. Alexander was one of 10,000 casualties. Many of the dead, including Alexander, and the very heart of the 13th Battalion lay, until identified and buried, in the soil they had captured.

A cross unveiled at Vimy Ridge by the Canadian prime minister commemorates all those who lost their lives there while serving in the Royal Highlanders. Examination of the names of all those who died reveals that many were of Scottish parents who had emigrated in earlier years, or, like Alexander, who had arrived in Canada seeking a new life but who died fighting in France. They are all remembered daily on Parliament Hill, Ottawa.

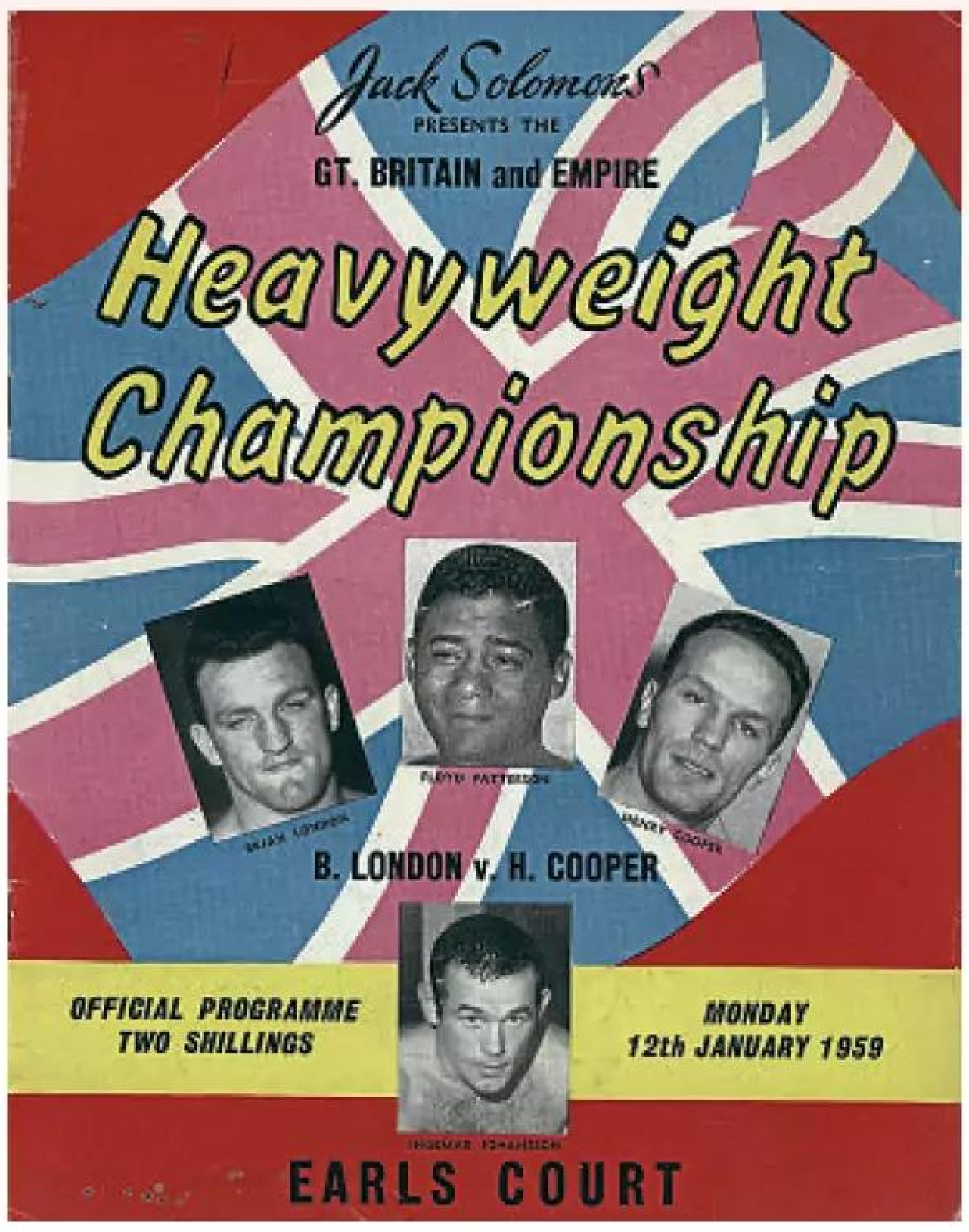
Colin MacLeod
Beauly, Inverness



On the morning of 27th June, after a heavy bombardment the Germans tried to effect an entrance into our trenches. Sgt McLeod went out single handed and tackled one of the parties and forced them to retire, afterwards chasing them up with bombs

Charles Front

I Was There



Dear Simon,

I have always enjoyed sport and have been lucky enough to attend some great sporting events.

I was at Wembley for the 1953 FA Cup final. Known as the "Matthews Final", it was Stanley Matthews's third FA Cup final appearance for Blackpool, with the previous two being lost. At 38, 1953 was almost certainly his last chance in what some thought might be his final season. Everybody (except the Bolton Wanderers fans) wanted to see him receive a winner's medal.

Blackpool won a thrilling match 4-3. As for Matthews, he just kept on playing season after season, earning the accolade of the inaugural Ballon d'Or, as European Footballer of the Year when he was 41, and the Football Writers' Association Footballer of the Year award in England when he was 48. He played on until he was 50 at the top level.

In 1953, there was a massive queue down Wembley Way to Wembley station after the match. While waiting, we had the pleasure of being passed by the Blackpool coach containing all their players and the FA Cup itself. We gave them a cheer.

I saw David Gower score a century in 1990 against India at the Oval. I had seen more exciting innings but this one stood out for a reason. It was effortless. He was facing bowlers of Test match status but he made them look like schoolboys. He knew it and they knew it.

I was at London's Earl's Court when Henry Cooper beat Brian London to win the British Heavyweight Championship for the first time in January 1959. Nobody could have guessed that night how popular Cooper would become. He was British champion three times but everyone remembers the fight where he put Cassius Clay (later to become Muhammad Ali) on his backside.

Henry Cooper easily outpointed Brian London that night. I will always remember how sporting London was at the end of the fight. He raised Cooper's arm before the referee did. However, there was still another round to go. Poor old Brian. Henry won easily but, as usual, he was bleeding quite a lot.

Of course, Cooper went on to be very well known, not just for boxing but after retiring for his appearances on television shows and in adverts. So well known, in fact, that if you said Our 'Enry, people knew who you meant. Not only was he a "brute" when boxing, he was also a "Brut" when retired. Once a "Brut", always a "brute". I put that line in not so much as an afterthought but as an aftershave.

In 1966, I was lucky enough to be one of the 13,000 in Ayresome Park, Middlesbrough to watch one of the biggest shock results in the history of football's World Cup as North Korea defeated Italy 1-0.

North Korea trained at Ayresome Park during the tournament, so the Middlesbrough crowd adopted the country as their home team. North Korea lost 3-0 to the Soviet Union, drew 1-1 with Chile and then shocked Italy. What a roar went up when the final whistle blew in the latter match. We had all seen it happen but found it so hard to believe.

I think the Italian players found it even harder. They had left their country full of hope but returned to be pelted with tomatoes.

David Sim
Normanby, Middlesbrough, North Yorkshire

Can you help?

Ballroom and popular sequence dancing gentleman would like to meet lady, 64+ for local events (Ilminster/Taunton area). I have a nice dancefloor and a jukebox with 60s/70s records for practice and improvement.
Julian Bittleston, Tel: 01460 281993

The Friends of Dover Castle are keen to find any information relating to anybody who was stationed at, or worked at, Dover Castle either service or civilian roles. The castle still had troops quartered in barracks there until 1958 and from the 1960s to the 80s, the castle tunnels were used as a cold war regional seat of government. These tunnels had previously played an important role during World War Two. We are also interested in any information relating to Dover Home Guard for an ongoing project.
The Friends of Dover Castle, 1 Keep Yard, Dover Castle, Castle Hill, Dover, Kent CT16 1HU Email: fodc2025@outlook.com

I am looking for relatives of men/women who would have served on the World War Two gun and searchlight battery, Inner Froward Point, near Brixham, Devon. Any information gladly received.
Chris Martindill, Flat 4, Harden House, Trelissick Road, Paignton, Devon TQ3 3GJ Tel: 01803 525483.

Trying to trace Brian Knight, last seen in Pendeen, Cornwall, and employed at the Summercourt Guest House in Pendeen owned by Mr and Mrs Torrance. We were guests there mid-70s. The last we heard about him was that he had gone back home to Luton with his two daughters, Eve and Dawn, if I recall. It would be nice to talk to him.
Les Gee, Email: lesgee45@hotmail.com

I would like some penfriends to write to who like classic reggae, calypso, ska and world music. I'm aged 60 and would also like to write to people who like classic television, drama and comedy.
Colin Griffiths, 5 Chaston Place, Kettering, Northamptonshire NN16 9TF

Is there anyone out there who took part in the Essex Senior Scout 4th European Expedition to Germany in the summer of 1959? If so, I would love to hear from you; I have a number of photos but no other paper records of our first ever visit abroad.
David Sansom, Email: davidwsansom@yahoo.co.uk

Looking for information on the newspaper photographer EWS "Bill" Byers who worked with the likes of the Ilford Recorder from his office at 16 The Broadway, Ilford Lane. I would be grateful to see any examples of his pictures including football matches and Norman Wisdom's 1953 appearance at Barkingside High Street.
Rob Meyers, 123 Ashurst Drive, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 1HA

Requests for information, friends and family searches and reunion announcements can be included here free of charge. Send any requests, written as concisely as possible, to Can You Help?, Best of British, Kelsey Media Ltd, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 6JR or by email to info@bestofbritishmag.co.uk

Grounded

Dear Simon,

There was a time when people grew up, went to work where their father did and when they married, lived near their parents, maybe even in the same street. That doesn't happen anymore.

Some years ago, my eldest grandson went to Spain to get a job there and, in what seemed like no time at all, met and fell in love with a Spanish girl. They've just got married. And I still remember his first words as a toddler; they were: "Jesus Christ". He was copying his father who was not a patient driver and when someone turned or changed lanes without indicating he would say: "Jesus Christ". My grandson thinks this can't be true, just a good story.

The wedding invitations were in Spanish but could be translated into English by scanning a QR code. Who'd have thought it? The translation just appeared on the screen.

When in Spain, if you want to say something in Spanish all you now need to do is to say it in English and ask your mobile to translate. Isn't technology amazing? So, the Spanish phrase book I bought was a waste of money.

I was looking forward to the wedding, but our flights were cancelled because of the fire and power outage at Heathrow that hit the headlines. Unfortunately, we could not get another one in time.

In Spain, it's traditional for the bridegroom's mum to walk down the aisle with the groom before the bride arrives. The setting for the wedding was a very beautiful church (see photo). At the reception, the bride and groom started things off with a choreographed dance. They also did a dance where they weaved their way around the tables and the guests all stood up and waved their napkins, very continental but something we could copy don't you think?

The wedding pictures include one of their dog Bruno in his wedding gear (photo attached). He didn't attend the wedding but was brought along by the dog sitter for the photoshoot. Dogs like to feel they are part of the family, so I expect he enjoyed that.

In the UK, brides don't always take their husband's name but, in Spain, they never do. Any children have a double-barrelled name. I'm also told that the groom wears his wedding ring on his right hand, so ladies, don't check the left hand if you want to know whether your Spanish boyfriend is single.

The couple honeymooned in Japan, not somewhere people ever went to on holiday when I was young.

So, that's it then, the wedding I nearly went to.

Don Alcott
Shirley, Solihull

Gold-top and Bull

Dear Simon,

Inspired by Susan Brewer's article in the May issue, Gotta Lotta Bottle, my thoughts went back many years to when I was a playing member of Stony Stratford Cricket Club.

We had a member, Pete, join the club about the time the development of Milton Keynes was still in its early stages. Pete's day job required him to contact potential customers on the new housing estates and build milk rounds for his company. Unfortunately for Pete, this included all day on match days.

Pete's problem arose when he was selected to play in the first team because, as one of leading clubs in our area, our local weekly newspaper published a match report and a full scorecard of our games, which would reveal Pete's name and whereabouts to his boss.

Many cloak and dagger meetings took place between Pete, our captain, and scorer, plus many pints of beer in the club bar, before it was decided that Pete's identity for cricket reporting should be known as G Topps – a variation of the creamier pint of milk, gold-top.

The history books tell us that the coaching town of Stony Stratford is the original home of the saying "a cock and bull story" based on exaggerated stories that came from the two hotels in the high street. Regardless of this reputation, I am assured that these are the facts and Pete's boss was never able to shout: "Howzat?"

Terry Glenn
Old Stratford, Buckinghamshire

‘No, Mum, they’re Heinkels!’

Dear Simon,

The very first air raid on London was carried out in broad daylight on Saturday 7 September 1940. At that time, I was a 10-year-old lad, living with my parents and little sister at Vauxhall Grove in Lambeth, close to the River Thames and Westminster.

How everything changed on that sunny Saturday afternoon, the air raid sirens had sounded, and we made our way to the small brick shelter that had been recently built opposite our front door.

After the sirens had ceased their wailing, London fell very quiet. Nothing is as quiet as a city waiting to be attacked and we just stayed in the shelter and hoped it was a false alarm, as this period was still part of what was known as “the Phoney War”.

After a few minutes, things changed. We heard the noise of a few ack-ack guns firing in the distance. My mother and I went and stood at the open door of the shelter and scanned the sky but could see nothing untoward.

Then we saw them, quite high but a crowd of bright sparkling shapes that gradually became swept backed wings and glittering bulbous noses. They were in perfect formations and seemed to be quite unopposed.

The formations swept over Vauxhall and, as one, turned slowly and gracefully into a right-hand turn and followed the River Thames eastwards, which we now know was their bombing run to the docks and the East End industrial area.

My mother said: “They must be ours”, but I was pretty good with aircraft recognition and said: “No, Mum, they’re Heinkels.”

I saw further formations coming along behind them and recognised them as Dornier Do 17s, known as the “Flying pencils”. There seemed to be hundreds and hundreds of them, flying over our capital with impunity.

My father told me later that at that moment he realised just what England was up against and feared the worst. That thought was quickly backed up by the sight of black clouds of smoke and flames from the stricken docks area.

We found out much later that the Luftwaffe had stopped attacking RAF airfields and went direct for our capital city. Thus began the first onslaught that lasted for all the years to 1945 when the war finally ended. We also know that never again would the Luftwaffe be able to attack London without battling with our RAF fighters and, of course, the Battle of Britain ended in the UK’s favour.

Ron McGill
Worplesdon, Guildford, Surrey

Mob Handed

Dear Simon,

I was intrigued by the mention of actor Rayner Bourton in Colin Baker’s Back in Time column (May). I was convinced this name was entirely new to me as I had no recollection of seeing it on the credits of anything I had watched.

At around the same time, I discovered that all 54 episodes of 1980s children’s drama series Murphy’s Mob have now been uploaded to YouTube. A police constable made several appearances throughout series one in dealing with various matters at the ground of fictional flea-bitten Fourth Division outfit Dunmore United Football Club. The upholder of the law appeared to be portrayed by the same actor each time but imagine my surprise when scrutiny of the credits revealed a change of performer in the latter episodes – none other than Colin Baker’s old friend, Rayner Bourton.

The writing (by series creator Brian Finch) and acting of the lead characters was superb in the first three series of Murphy’s Mob, particularly the goalkeeping saga across the second half of series two (hands up those of you who knew John “Boycie” Challis played ousted first-choice goalkeeper Harry Bradshaw in two episodes) and the story arc across series three. Something was missing from the final season – and not just the main man himself, the brilliant Ken Hutchinson as Mac Murphy, for the first half of the series.

Photograph: ITV

The mainstays across the piece were Terence Budd (as flamboyant owner-chairman Rasputin Jones), Milton Johns (as the weasel-like Derek Cassidy, nemesis of the “Mob”), the aforementioned Hutchinson, and Keith Jayne (Boxer) and Lewis Stevens (Wurzel) as the leading lights of the junior supporters’ club. Lynda Bellingham was pivotal as Mac Murphy’s wife, Elaine, in series one but was missing for a large chunk of the second season and then not seen again. Former Doctor Who star Janet Fielding stepped into the breach in series three as Mac’s Australian niece Caroline but her role appeared to be restricted to answering the door and making her screen uncle cups of tea.

Murphy’s Mob was a real gem and, given the energetic performances of Hutchinson, Budd, Johns and Stevens, deserved to be brought to a wider audience both 40+ years ago, instead of being restricted to the children’s schedules, and now (no presence on ITVX and I believe only a single episode on BritBox).

Jon Harris

The Retro TV Times

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SKY 328 | FREEVIEW 82
FREESAT 306 | VIRGIN 445

Goldeneye (1989)
(Sunday 1 June, 8.30am)
Biography. Director: Don Boyd. Starring: Charles Dance, Phyllis Logan, Patrick Ryecart and Marsha Fitzalan. The story of Ian Fleming and how his work inspired James Bond.

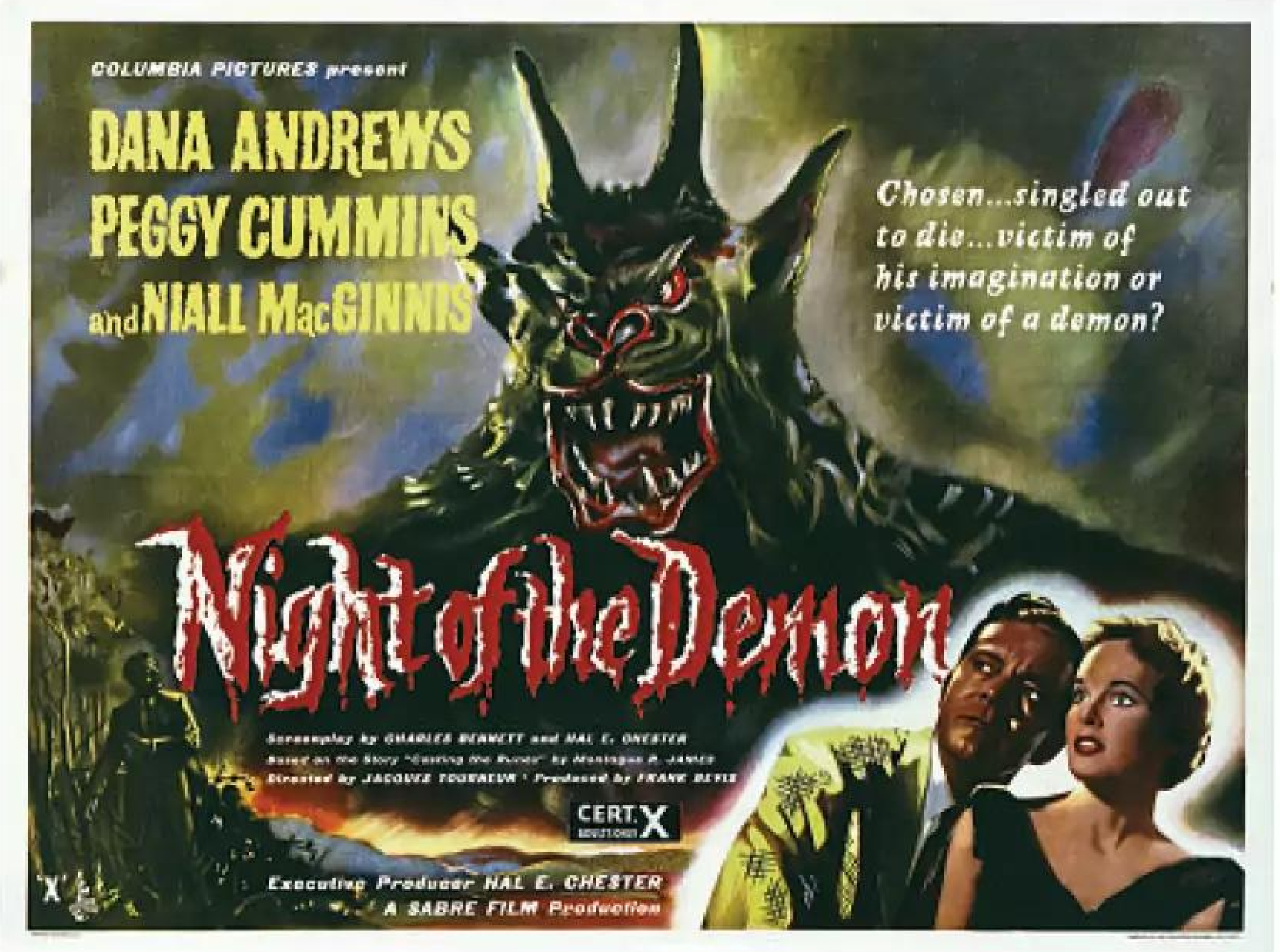
The Last Escape (1970)
(Friday 6 June, 6.40pm)
Action. Director: Walter Grauman. Starring: Martin Jarvis, Margit Saad, Stuart Whitman and John Collin. An American officer joins British soldiers trying to kidnap a German rocket scientist, while avoiding SS and Soviet forces who are also after him.

A Dandy in Aspic (1968)
(Saturday 7 June, 9.05pm)
Thriller. Director: Anthony Mann. Starring: Laurence Harvey, Tom Courtenay and Mia Farrow. British Intelligence orders its operatives to eliminate a Soviet spy, unaware he's one of their own men.

Meantime (1983)
(Monday 9 June, 9.05pm)
Comedy/Drama. Director: Mike Leigh. Starring: Gary Oldman, Tim Roth, Phil Daniels and Alfred Molina. A remarkable story following the lives of the Pollack family and their struggles to make ends meet.

It Always Rains on Sunday (1947)
(Friday 13 June, 4.40pm)
Drama. Director: Robert Hamer. Starring: Googie Withers and John McCallum. Rose wants to escape the drudgery of her daily life when an old lover escapes from prison.

Night of the Demon (1957)
(Sunday 15 June, 9.55pm)
Horror. Director: Jacques Tourneur. Starring: Dana Andrews, Peggy Cummins and Niall MacGinnis. A sceptical American psychologist visits England and investigates a fellow scientist's mysterious death. In so doing, he encounters a black magician who has the power to invoke an ancient fire demon to do his bidding.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PEGGY CUMMINS
and NIALL MacGINNIS
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Night of the Demon
CERT. X
Executive Producer HAL E. CHESTER
A SABRE FILM Production

iPLAYER
bbc.co.uk/iplayer

Theatre 625
Talking to a Stranger Judi Dench stars in John Hopkins' quartet of plays that recount the events of one weekend from the viewpoints of four members of the same family. Hailed by critics as one of the most important and affecting television dramas of the 1960s, it won Judi Dench her first British Academy Television Award for Best Actress.

Doctor Who
The Daleks' Master Plan: Escape Switch
Steven and Sara are held hostage by the Daleks who demand that the Doctor hand over the vital taranium core, or his companions will be exterminated.

Theatre 625 *Talking to a Stranger*

Man Alive
Hyde Park First transmitted in 1971, John Pitman reports on a day in the life of Hyde Park, meeting the soldiers who live there, early morning Serpentine swimmers and other local characters.

itvX
itv.com

Code of a Killer
John Simm and David Threlfall star in this groundbreaking crime drama based on a true story. A scientist and a detective are both intent on solving a grisly Leicester murder case.

Upstairs, Downstairs
Bafta-winning drama about the turbulent lives of the Bellamy clan and their servants in the early 1900s. Everyday family issues play out amid huge social and political change.

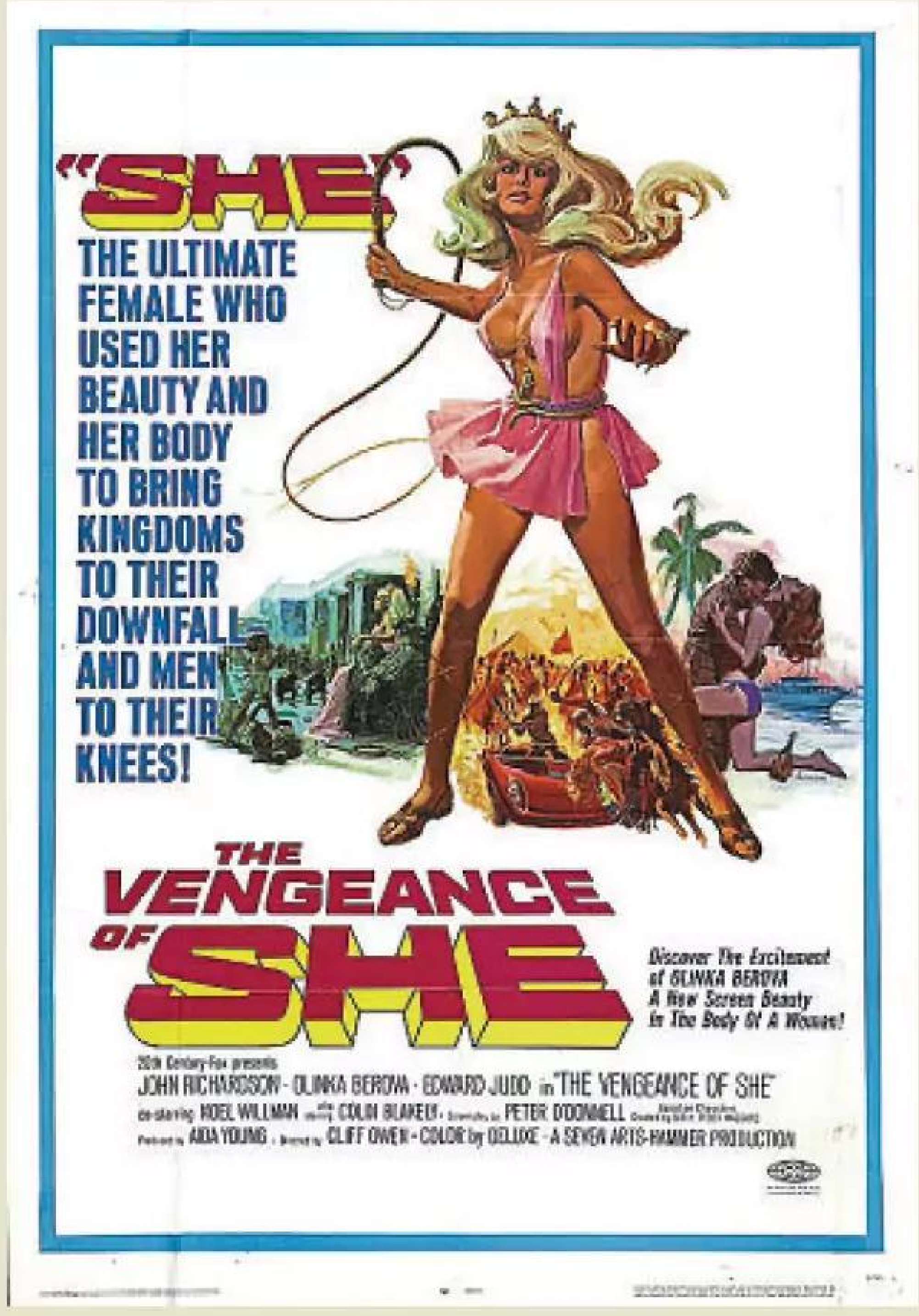
Rising Damp
Leonard Rossiter, Frances de la Tour, Richard Beckinsale and Don Warrington star in this classic 70s sitcom set in a tumbledown boarding house.

Photographs: (Theatre 625) BBC, (Rebus) STV

LEGEND **FREEVIEW 41, SKY 148, FREESAT 137, VIRGIN 149**

Yangtse Incident: The Story of HMS Amethyst (1957)
(Wednesday 4 June, 2.40pm)
While sailing lawfully up the Yangste in 1949, the British warship Amethyst found its return to the open sea blocked by communist Chinese shore batteries that unexpectedly opened fire. In charge, Lieutenant Commander Kerans (Richard Todd) was, however, not prepared for his crew and his ship to remain as a hostage for the Chinese to use as an international pawn.

Deathwatch (2002)
(Friday 13 June, 11.05pm)
A lost squad of British soldiers in World War One take shelter in an abandoned enemy trench, but it proves to be no refuge as the men find themselves hunted by unseen evils. Written and directed by MJ Bassett, the British cast includes Jamie Bell, Laurence Fox, Kris Marshall, Matthew Rhys and Andy Serkis.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co-starring NOEL WILLMAN · COLIN BLAKELY · PETER O'DONNELL
AIDA YOUNG · CLIFF OWEN · COLOR by DELUXE · A SEVEN ARTS-HAMMER PRODUCTION

The Vengeance of She (1968)
(Wednesday 18 June, 3pm)
A beautiful young European girl, Carol (Olinka Berova), is taken over by the spirit of mysterious Ayesha, queen of the lost city of Kuma. She is taken to Kuma to succeed the almost-immortal Ayesha as empress of Kuma. A Hammer Film directed by Cliff Owen.

The Deer Hunter (1978)
(Saturday 28 June, 10.45pm)
One of the most widely acclaimed films of all time, this is Michael Cimino's celebrated interpretation of the stresses and dangers – both physical and emotional – which confront a trio of Pennsylvanian steelworkers when they are sent out to fight in the horror that was the Vietnam war. Starring Robert De Niro, Christopher Walken, John Savage and Meryl Streep.

U&GOLD **SKY 110, VIRGIN 124, TALKTALK 310, NOW TV**

Only Fools and Horses
(Sunday 1 June, 9.05am)
The Unlucky Winner Is... The Trotters go overseas after Del enters one of Rodney's paintings in a competition and wins a week's holiday in Mallorca for three. But there's a catch...

Comedy Playhouse
(Monday 9 June, 9.55am)
Are You Being Served? The pilot episode of Britain's favourite department store sitcom from 1972. When Mr Grainger is asked to take down his trousers, the men are up in arms.

U&DRAMA **FREEVIEW/YOUVIEW/BT/ TALKTALK 20, SKY 143, VIRGIN 130, FREESAT 158**

Pie in the Sky
(Thursday 5 June, 2pm)
Black Pudding Richard Griffiths stars in the charming detective drama. A cantankerous food writer calls on Crabbe when her unpublished (and spicy) memoirs come under threat.

Rebus
(Saturday 14 June, 1.35am)
The First Stone The moderator-elect of the Church of Scotland and a female companion are found naked in a car with their throats cut, but the church closes ranks as Rebus (Ken Stott) investigates.

U&YESTERDAY **FREEVIEW/YOUVIEW/BT/ TALKTALK 27, SKY 155, VIRGIN 129, FREESAT 159**

Bangers & Cash
(Wednesday 4 June, 11pm)
Derek inspects a brace of old cop cars including a Rover P6 complete with radio, sirens and V8 engine, and a former mod waves ciao to his collection of 1960s Italian scooters.

Rebus: The First Stone

Antiques Roadshow
(Tuesday 10 June, 1pm)
Brooklands Fiona Bruce and her team of experts see what Surrey has to offer. Delightful finds include a rare stirrup cup, books once owned by Churchill and Queen Victoria's bracelet.

Watch Dave, U&W, U&Yesterday and U&Drama shows on demand with U (u.co.uk) and catch up on your favourite programmes.

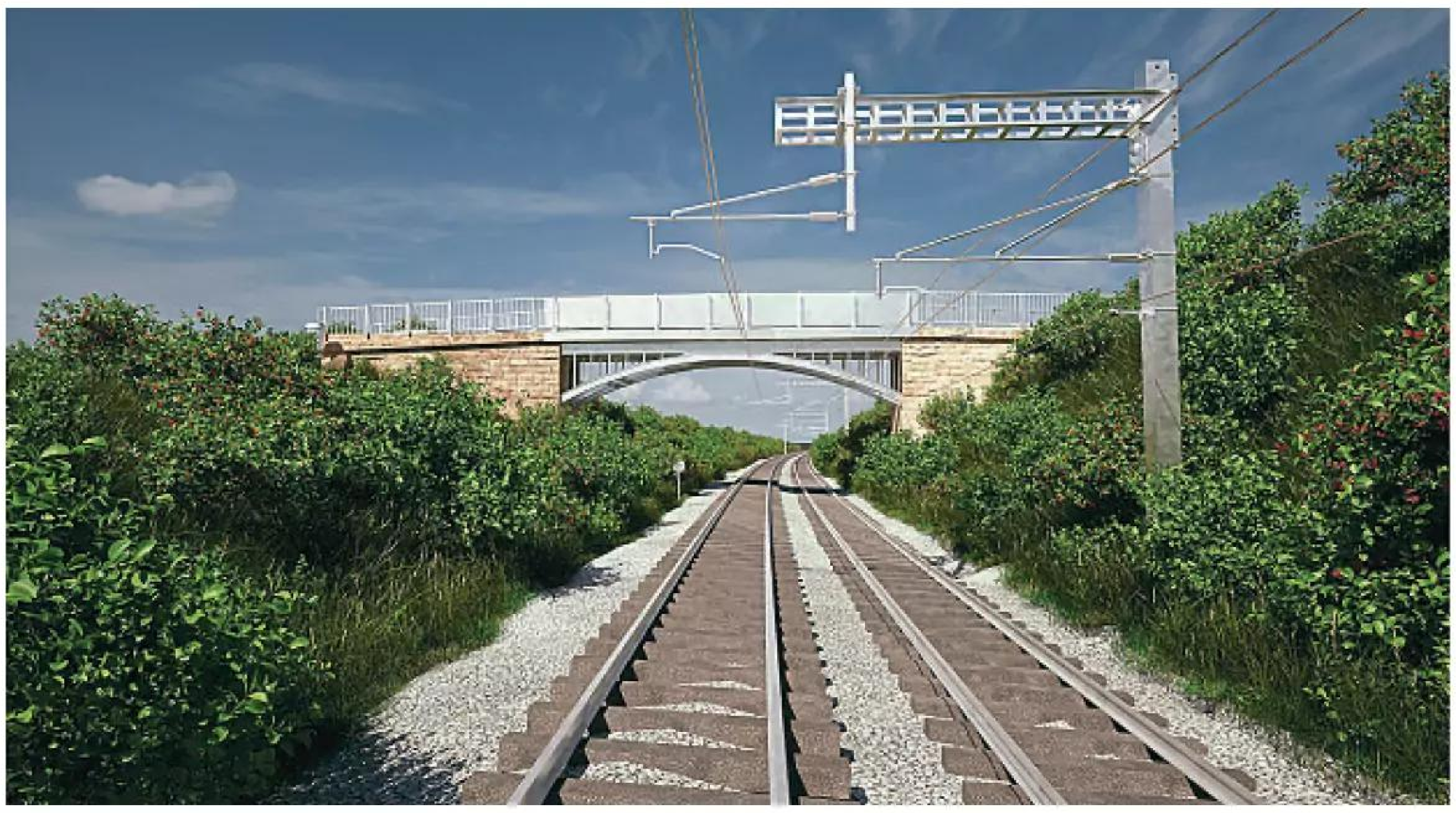
Channels may be unavailable in certain regions. If you are having trouble viewing channels, go to freeview.co.uk/freeview-channel-checker or call the Freeview Advice Line on 03456 50 50 50 (Mondays to Fridays, 9am-5pm).

BRITAIN NOW

TOPICAL SNIPPETS FROM AROUND OUR NATION

Raising the Route

Initial preparation work has begun to raise and renovate the earliest cast-iron railway bridge to still be in place over an operational railway. Constructed between 1830 and 1834, the Grade II-listed Crawshaw Woods Bridge is recognised by Historic England as one of the most significant structures on the Transpennine route. Following previous renovations in 1943 and 1999, the cast-iron girders, bridge deck, parapets and original iron railings will be carefully removed for off-site repair and renovation. When reinstated, the historic bridge will be raised by approximately 1.5m to create enough room for the installation of overhead line equipment (OLE), which will power electric trains through the area and beyond as part of the multi-billion-pound Transpennine Route Upgrade.



How the earliest cast-iron railway bridge will look after restoration work.

The Car's a Star

A motor museum has welcomed what Enzo Ferrari described as "the most beautiful car ever made" to its collection. Lakeland Motor Museum (015395 30400, lakelandmotormuseum.co.uk) has taken delivery of a 1967 Jaguar E-Type, a loan by local owner Gordon Aylmore of Storrs, Bowness-on-Windermere. A fixed head coupe with a 4.2 litre six-cylinder engine, capable of an impressive top speed of 150mph, the car's interior features leather upholstery, a wood rimmed steering wheel, toggle switches and analogue gauges.

"I've loved this car since I purchased it in 2015," said Mr Aylmore. "However, no longer driving it regularly, I wanted it to be kept somewhere that not only I could visit and enjoy it, but also to bring that joy to others. It's a car that has always received compliments whenever I drove it, so it would be a shame to have it hidden away in a garage. I hope visitors to the museum enjoy its beauty as much as I have."

In pristine condition, a local owner has loaned his 1967 Jaguar E-Type to the museum for fellow enthusiasts to enjoy.

An Olympic Task

Acclaimed stone carver Simon Smith adds the finishing touches to the head of Demeter, one of several sculptures being recreated for Olympia London.

Restoration has begun of the lost sculptures and friezes at Olympia London's Grand Hall entrance. Appointed by main contractor Laing O'Rourke, DBR London's specialist in-house craftspeople are recreating intricate architectural details to recapture the grandeur of one of the capital's most celebrated venues. The project, a key part of Olympia's £1.3bn transformation, focuses on reinstating allegorical figures and decorative elements removed in the mid-20th century. Built in 1886 as the National Agricultural Hall, the venue's original entranceway was celebrated for its handsome red brick and Portland stone facade as well as its sculptures evoking ancient Greek mythology. Working closely with acclaimed stone carver Simon Smith, these remarkable pieces will be installed by DBR's team of masons, whose impressive portfolio includes the conservation of the Elizabeth Tower and the repair, replacement and resetting of the Palace of Westminster's historic interior encaustic tiling.

Show Grows

A wool art exhibition that celebrates VE Day continues to grow as it makes its way around the UK. The exhibition, The Longest Yarn 2: Britain at War, had nine panels for its launch at Wonderwool Wales – the premier wool and natural fibre festival, which was held at the Royal Welsh Showground in April – but will grow to 80 as extra panels are added during a tour of the UK over the coming months.

The first nine panels include VE Day, Buckingham Palace, War is Declared, The Lorry on the Strand, Coventry Cathedral is Bombed and The Few.

Founder Tansy Forster and her fellow knitters and crocheters are creating the new installation to follow on from the success of The Longest Yarn, an 80-metre, 3D wool art depiction of the D-day landings, which toured the UK last year and is currently touring America.

More than 1,000 knitters and crocheters from across the world contributed to the first project which snowballed from Tansy's initial idea of a display for a garden wall at her home in Normandy.

"We have taken all aspects of life, rationing, evacuees, The Blitz, terrible headlines, when Britain was looking at the Darkest Hour, to end with the euphoria of peace," explains Tansy.

"When I first had my lightbulb moment, I really had no idea that it would lead to this incredible rollercoaster that I've been on for almost two years. Two hundred and fifty thousand people have visited the first exhibition and raised the same in monetary terms."

The Longest Yarn
A THREAD THROUGH HISTORY 2

Beginning with nine panels, wool art exhibition The Longest Yarn 2: Britain at War will expand to 80 panels by the time it visits Southwell Minster.

Tansy is hoping to double the £250,000 raised so far to establish a halfway house for British veterans, while also supporting dog charities which support people with disabilities and medical conditions.

At Gosport Museum & Art Gallery until 4 June, The Longest Yarn 2: Britain at War moves to Market Hall, Plymouth from 5-29 June, and visits other venues including Chiltern Open Air Museum on 1-31 August. All 80 panels will be on show by the time it reaches Southwell Minster on 3 September, where it will be on display until 27 September.

For further information on The Longest Yarn 2: Britain at War, along with other dates, go to thelongestyarn.com

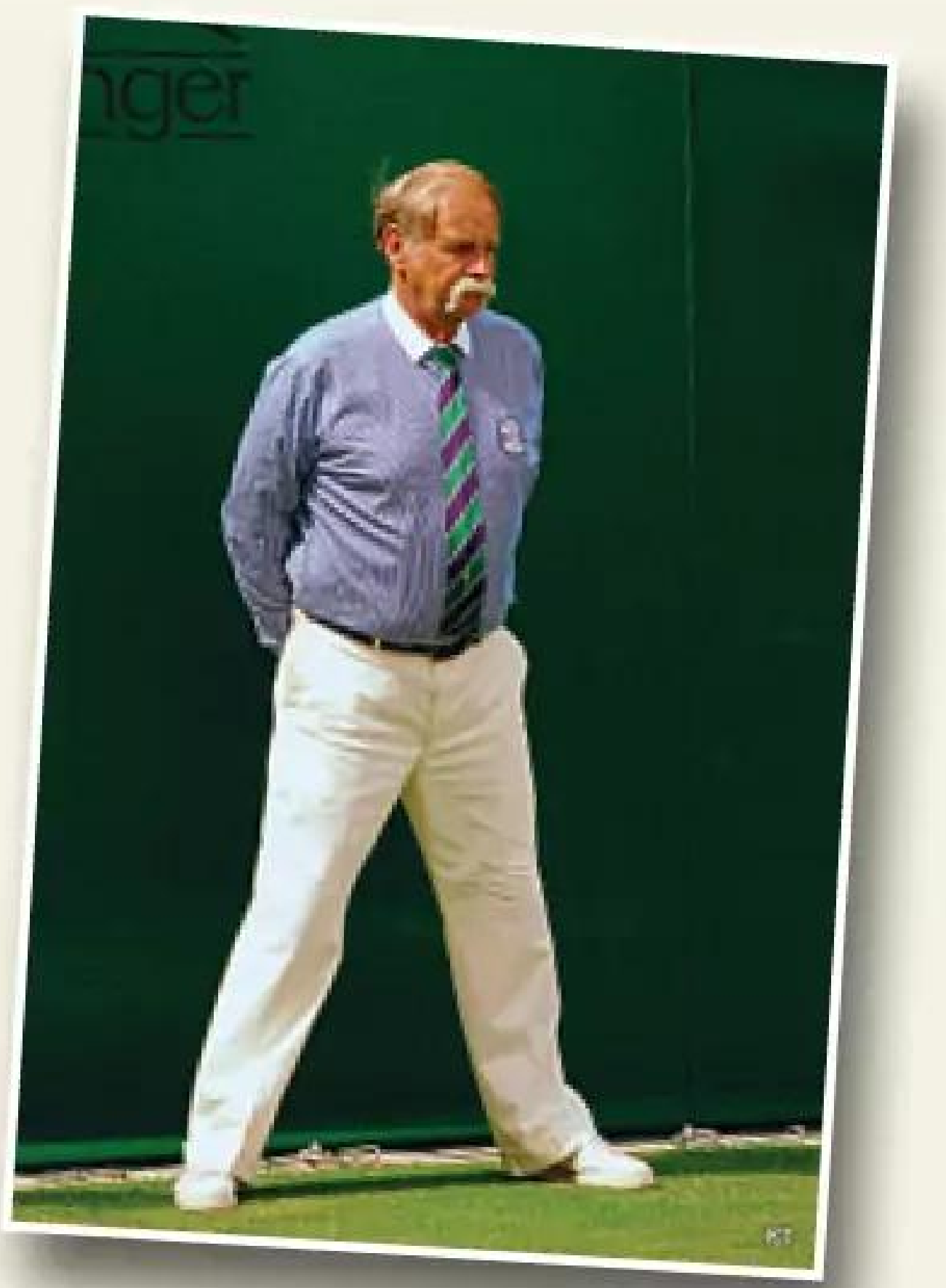
BEST OF BRITISH
PAST AND PRESENT

NEXT MONTH

In the July Issue of Best of British

Please Sir!
We talk to Frankie Abbott actor David Barry

Out!
Calling time on Wimbledon's line judges



The Lost Lionesses
Remembering the 1971 Women's World Cup

Write on Time
The history and influence of Pitman shorthand

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Question time

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A New Place to Dwell

Q My work colleagues and I are of a similar age and are always reminiscing about old comedy shows. However, there is a show that I remember that no one else seems to recollect. It was called Heartburn Hotel, and all I can remember is that it starred Tim Healy as the owner of a rather seedy hotel that had rooms named after old British athletes. If you could give me any information on this series, or indeed let me know if it is on DVD, I would be very grateful.
M Harris, Barnehurst, Kent

Tim Healy as ex-army cook Harry Springer in the John Sullivan sitcom Heartburn Hotel.

Best of British says: Written by Only Fools and Horses' John Sullivan, accompanied by co-writer Steve Glover, Heartburn Hotel was broadcast on BBC One across two series and a Christmas special in 1998 and 2000. Benidorm and Auf Wiedersehen, Pet star Tim Healey played Harry Springer, an ex-army cook who had bought a Birmingham hotel to capitalise on Birmingham's failed bid to host the 1992 Summer Olympics.

Renamed the Olympic Hotel, the rundown premises featured rooms such as The Torvill and Dean Lounge, The Geoff Capes Room, The Eddie the Eagle Suite and The Fatima Whitbread Grill. However, far from attracting athletes, it provided DSS-funded accommodation to those down on their luck including asylum seekers, drunks and veterans.

Among the permanent guests were soldier turned teacher Duggie Strachen, played by Game of Thrones' Clive Russell, who had served in the Falklands with Harry, and Harry's nephew Simon Thorpe, played by Peter Gunn, who is best known now as Coronation Street newsagent Brian Packham.

Guest stars included Nicholas R Bailey, who would go on to play EastEnders' Dr Trueman, as the freshly deposed African prince Prince Ekoku, and Tracie Bennett and Sally Dexter as models Rita and Yvonne who, unlike most of the guests at the Hotel Olympic, actually pay for their stay.

Kenneth MacDonald who played Only Fools and Horses pub landlord Mike made a guest appearance as O'Hare, another of Harry's old army pals, while behind the scenes, the show was directed by Only Fools and Horses alumni Gareth Gwenlan, who also served as producer, and Tony Dow.

Although episodes are available on YouTube, the series has not been repeated by the BBC and an official DVD is unavailable.

Beyond Our Ken

Q In your very interesting article regarding Richard Murdoch and others (Question Time, May) it was mentioned that Kenneth Horne was a director of Triplex Safety Glass. I was always under the impression that he was a director of the Chad Valley Toy Company. Do you know if this is true?
Roger Wickins, Cornwall

Best of British says: In 1928, Kenneth Horne joined Triplex Safety Glass as a management trainee. Having been "sent down" from university for neglecting his studies, it was his sporting prowess that actually secured him the role, as the company's sports and social club needed another rugby player.

Rising to the position of sales director, Horne left Triplex at the end of 1954, a few months after recording the Australian radio series Much Murdoch and Horne, to take up the role of managing director of the British Industries Fair, an annual trade fair to promote British manufacturing.

In 1955, the Board of Trade withdrew its funding, leading to the closure of the British Industries Fair. Horne was soon swamped with attractive job offers including the directorship of a commercial television station but decided to join Birmingham-based toy manufacturer Chad Valley as its chairman and managing director.

In February 1958, Horne suffered a stroke while driving, and although he made a good recovery and quickly returned to broadcasting, decided to cut his ties with business, resigning from Chad Valley in May 1958.

ASK US! **If you've got a question, the Best of British staff will do its best to find the answer. Occasionally we get stuck and look to our readers for assistance. Whether you've got something to ask, can provide an answer, or want to add to the information provided, please email info@bestofbritishmag.co.uk or write to us at Kelsey Media Ltd, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle LN9 6JR.**

Photograph: BBC

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> *Rachel Zeffert, Childwall*

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The Need for Steed

Chris Hallam remembers The Avengers star Patrick Macnee

On the face of it, the character of John Steed, played by Patrick Macnee in the ITV series The Avengers, was an unlikely icon for the swinging 60s. In a decade obsessed with youth, modernity and working-class heroes, Steed was not only middle-aged (Macnee turned 40 in 1962) but resolutely old-fashioned, an old Etonian and a throwback. Suave and debonair, Steed was rarely seen without his trademark bowler hat and umbrella and usually drove either a Bentley or a Rolls-Royce.

Macnee had largely created the character of Steed himself. When The Avengers first aired in 1961, it was a much less glamorous show than the one it ultimately became. Essentially a vehicle for Ian Hendry, who played lead character Dr David Keel, Macnee was cast as Steed, an unfashionable trenchcoat-wearing undercover operative who would serve as Keel's link to the underworld. But it soon became obvious Steed wasn't really working out as a character. Canadian producer Sydney Newman suggested Macnee read Ian Fleming's James Bond books and consider making some changes.

The actor did as he was told, drawing on the fashion sense of his father and remembering how he had always worn a carnation in his buttonhole and had the collars of his overcoats covered in velvet. He now adopted this look for John Steed. On first seeing Macnee turn up for work in

Top: As John Steed in The Avengers, Patrick Macnee was an unlikely icon for the swinging 60s.

Left: Pictured in the Columbo episode Troubled Waters, Macnee had served with the Royal Navy on motor torpedo boats during World War Two, rising to the position of lieutenant by the time he was demobbed in 1946. Right: The launch of The Avengers on home video in 1993 saw Patrick Macnee reunite with his former co-stars Linda Thorson, Diana Rigg and Honor Blackman.

his new garb, Ian Hendry swore out loud in surprise. Newman, meanwhile, hedged his bets: "Well, it's sure as hell different."

It was. Macnee drew on other influences, both real and fictional. Macnee had once been in a film about The Scarlet Pimpernel, a fashionable 18th century dandy who was constantly underestimated by his enemies. He also drew upon Major Charles Hammond, another fictional character, this time played by Ralph Richardson in the spy film Q Planes (1939). Finally, he also remembered the real-life bravery of Bussy Carr, his commanding officer in the Royal Navy during World War Two.

These innovations not only saved Macnee's job but helped transform The Avengers into an international phenomenon which would endure for almost the entire decade and which would change television forever. Hendry left the show early on, but Macnee was soon joined by Honor Blackman who took on the role of Dr Cathy Gale, Steed's leather-clad partner, sex symbol and crimefighter between 1962 and 1964. Blackman, along with the character of Venus Smith played by Julie Stevens, were just the first of a succession of memorable female co-stars for Macnee. They were followed by Diana Rigg, who played the sexy and sophisticated Emma Peel (1965-67), when the show reached the peak of its popularity, and Linda Thorson, who was cast as Tara King (1968-69) as the series moved towards its end.

Classy and urbane, the character of Steed would be a constant feature throughout. Macnee was the only actor to appear in every one of the show's 161 episodes. The Avengers experience completely dominated Macnee's experience of the 1960s and was the defining role of his life.

> **“These innovations not only saved Macnee's job but helped transform The Avengers into an international phenomenon.”**

His childhood had been privileged but unusual. His father was a racehorse trainer known as Daniel "Shrimp" Macnee, because of his height. A World War One veteran, he liked to drink and would occasionally get his shotgun out and point it at people during dinner parties, but to his credit, as his son noticed, was always impeccably dressed. His mother, Dorothea, meanwhile, was a niece of the Earl of Huntingdon. A busy socialite, she gave birth to Daniel Patrick Macnee in 1922 after going into labour at a dinner party. She later ran away with wealthy lesbian Evelyn Spottiswoode, while Macnee's father fled to India. The two women brought up the boy themselves, encouraging him to wear a dress. He resisted, sometimes compromising by wearing a kilt. Despite being born in Paddington, central London, Macnee's surname and family background led him to identify as a Scot. He grew up in the socially lively estate of Rooksnest House where he was encouraged to call his mother's lover "Uncle Evelyn". It was a difficult childhood. Along with a constant flow of guests including everyone from Rudyard Kipling to Hollywood star Tallulah Bankhead, Dorothea and Evelyn's household sometimes had as many as 45 dogs.

It was Evelyn who paid for much of Macnee's education. He acted for the first time opposite Christopher Lee while at Summer Fields boarding school in Summertown, Oxford before being expelled from Eton for selling pornography and acting as a bookmaker for other pupils. Less shamefully, he joined the Officer Training Corps while at Eton and was one of the guard of honour for George V's funeral in 1936.

Having trained at the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art, Macnee's acting career was just starting to take off when the war intervened. He had just been cast opposite Vivien Leigh in the West End when he was called up. He served on motor torpedo boats with the Royal Navy, rising to the position of lieutenant by the time he was demobbed in 1946. An attack of bronchitis caused him to miss D-day. As his crew's boat approached the shore on 6 June 1944, the craft he would have been on was destroyed. All his crew were killed.

The years ahead saw him taking numerous screen roles, many of them on the newly emerging medium of television. Among other things, the young Macnee can be spotted in The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp (1943), Scrooge (1951) and The Battle of the River Plate (1956). His first marriage ended when he walked out on his wife, Barbara Douglas, and two children, Rupert and Jenny, to go to Canada in 1956. He later bitterly regretted this decision (he fought several long battles with depression and alcoholism). He was cast in The Avengers soon after returning to the UK in 1960. He later married actress Katherine Woodville in 1965, before divorcing in 1969 and, finally, marrying his third wife, Baba Majos de Nagyzsenye, in 1988, the couple staying together until her death in 2007.

His success as John Steed entirely swallowed up his 1960s. At one point, he recorded the infuriatingly catchy novelty record Kinky Boots with co-star Honor Blackman. Macnee was so nervous about performing on it that he drank heavily beforehand. In the event, the song was a flop, only achieving Top 10 success when it was re-released 30 years later.

Macnee reprised the role of Steed in The New Avengers (1976-77). Now in his 50s, Macnee took more of a backseat role leaving much of the action to his younger co-stars, Joanna Lumley and Gareth Hunt. In the end, the revamp never recaptured the wry sense of humour nor, crucially, the popularity, of the original.

He never entirely escaped the ghost of John Steed, however. Although he lived to the age of 93, dying 10 years ago in June 2015, little of his post-Avengers work proved terribly memorable. Notable highlights included roles in the original television Battlestar Galactica, werewolf horror The Howling (1981), film comedy classic This Is Spinal Tap (1984), Roger Moore's final Bond film A View to a Kill (1985), and one-off parts in Columbo, Hart to Hart, and Frasier. In 1996, he cameoed in the video for Oasis's Don't Look Back in Anger.

But this is not the end to a sad story. For The Avengers alone, Patrick Macnee left a permanent and indelible imprint which will never disappear. In the popular culture afterlife, the towering figure of Macnee as John Steed, umbrella in hand and bowler hat on head, shall stand tall forever, perhaps enjoying a glass of champagne with agents Cathy Gale and Emma Peel as he does so.

Stairway to Success

Chris Hallam celebrates the acting and writing talents of Upstairs, Downstairs co-creator Jean Marsh

Jean Marsh was on holiday in the south of France when she came up with the idea which would completely transform her life. Jean was with her friend, Eileen Atkins. Both were actresses in their 30s and were house-sitting for a well-to-do mutual friend. "I'd love more of this," Jean reflected, as she relaxed luxuriously by the pool. "Then write down the idea!" Eileen replied. Jean's idea had been simple. It was the late 1960s and Jean had been struck by the recent enormous success of the 1967 adaptation of John Galsworthy's The Forsyte Saga. "It was beautiful, of course," Jean reflected later. "The clothes, the houses... but we thought... who is cooking the food and ironing the clothes? At the time, apart from Dickens, there was nothing written about the working classes. And I was determined to be the maid and not the lady."

The two actresses originally envisaged a comedy series entitled Behind the Green Baize Door in which they would play two Victorian housemaids. The idea evolved. The comedy element was dropped, the name changed, and the setting moved forward in time, starting in the Edwardian era of 1903, a time then still well within living memory for older viewers. Importantly, an "upstairs" family, the Bellamys of 165 Eaton Place, Belgravia, central London were also introduced. As Jean observed: "Servants have to serve somebody."

The result, Upstairs, Downstairs first went out in October 1971. ITV franchise London Weekend Television initially showed little confidence in the new series, sneaking it out in a graveyard slot of 10pm on Sundays. "They'll switch off in their thousands," predicted Cyril Bennett, LWT's head of drama. "It's very pretty, but it's just not commercial television."

However, Bennett was wrong. Large numbers of viewers soon came to know and love characters such as the proud Scots butler Mr Hudson (Gordon Jackson), cook Mrs Bridges (Angela Baddeley), chirpy parlourmaid Sarah Moffat (Pauline Collins), and rakish son of the house, James Bellamy (Simon Williams). Although Eileen Atkins proved unavailable to act in the series in the end, Jean Marsh took the plum role of stern parlourmaid Rose Buck.

Running across 68 episodes and five series until 1975, Upstairs, Downstairs ultimately marked not just the high point of Jean Marsh's career but represented a landmark

Top: Jean Marsh pictured with one of the many awards she won for co-creating and appearing in Upstairs, Downstairs.

Photographs: (Main) Ronald Spencer/ANL/Shutterstock, (Doctor Who) BBC

JEAN MARSH
The HOUSE of ELIOTT

Left: As well as Upstairs, Downstairs, Jean Marsh and Dame Eileen Atkins co-created the period drama The House of Eliott. Right: Appearing in Doctor Who three times, Jean Marsh's first appearance in the programme was as the Princess Joanna in the William Hartnell story The Crusades.

in the history of British television. The show was a massive hit, winning two Baftas and peaking at 18 million viewers. It was also sold to 80 countries and was a big success overseas, particularly in the US where Jean won an Emmy for outstanding acting as well as two Golden Globe nominations.

The final scenes saw Jean, as Rose, lost in her memories of the past in the empty house of 1930. Jean Marsh's own story began only slightly later in Stoke Newington, London where she was born in 1934. Her father had been a printer's assistant while her mother had worked as a parlourmaid, barmaid and a dresser for the theatre. Jean and her sister, Yvonne, grew up in a household with no kitchen or bathroom and routinely shared a bed.

At 15, Jean left school to train as a dancer. "If you were very working-class in those days you weren't going to think of a career in science," she said later. "You either did a tap dance or you worked in Woolworths." She initially began dancing as part of a treatment for a bout of nervous paralysis before moving into repertory theatre.

In 1959, she spent three years in the US after joining John Gielgud to appear in a Broadway run of Much Ado About Nothing. This led to one of her first television roles alongside Laurence Olivier in an American TV film of The Moon and Sixpence. Subsequent roles included a tiny part in the Elizabeth Taylor epic Cleopatra (1963) and on the small screen in Danger Man, The Twilight Zone, I Spy, The Saint, and The Persuaders! By the time she met Eileen Atkins, she had been acting for nearly 20 years. "We were exactly the same age, both sort of working-class and we were always laughing," Jean remembered.

Jean was married to the actor Jon Pertwee during her early 20s between 1955 and 1960. This was long before Pertwee's two most famous roles as the Third Doctor and the scarecrow Worzel Gummidge. By complete coincidence, by the time Pertwee moved into the Tardis, Jean had already forged an association with Doctor Who herself, playing one of Richard the Lionheart's sisters in one early serial and later taking up the mantle of the Doctor's companion Sara Kingdom during William Hartnell's tenure as the Doctor in 1965. She would return to the show in the Sylvester McCoy era and later reprise the role of Sara in various Doctor Who audio adventures for Big Finish Productions.

She never married again, although became something of a sex symbol because of her Upstairs, Downstairs role. She enjoyed relationships with actors Kenneth Haigh and Albert Finney, and was especially close to director Sir Michael Lindsay-Hogg.

Later roles included a part in Alfred Hitchcock's penultimate film, Frenzy (1972), and as the fiercely anti-British traitor Joanna Grey in the wartime thriller The Eagle Has Landed (1976). She was memorably villainous in the fantasy films Return to Oz (1985) and Willow (1988). She was a baddie again in the 1990s version of TV science fiction series The Tomorrow People. She also appeared in the 2008 television version of Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility as Mrs Ferrars.

The 1990s saw Jean Marsh and Eileen Atkins enjoy another success as the creators of The House of Eliott, a drama based around a 1920s fashion house ran by two sisters. Starring Stella Gonet and Louise Lombard, the BBC series ran for three series between 1991 and 1994. Comedy duo French and Saunders parodied the series in an extended sketch called House of Idiot.

In 2010, however, there was much excitement at the news Upstairs, Downstairs was being revived. The new version would be on the BBC and the comma would be dropped from the title. With a strong cast including Keeley Hawes, Anne Reid, Claire Foy, Alex Kingston and Sarah Lancashire, hopes were high. The story would pick up in 1936 with a new family occupying the same house of 165 Eaton Place and Jean returning as Rose Buck. There was also a new "upstairs" role for Dame Eileen Atkins as the ageing Lady Holland.

Unfortunately, Jean, who was by now in her 70s, suffered a heart attack and a stroke around this time and ended up seeing much of her part being written out. Although generally well-received, the new Upstairs Downstairs proved to be short-lived, having been completely overshadowed by the slightly earlier release of ITV's early 20th century period drama Downton Abbey, which also began late in 2010. "It might be a coincidence," Jean said at the time. "And I might be the Queen of Belgium." As it is, Downton continues to be an enormous success to this day, with a third and final film version scheduled for release in September. In contrast, the new Upstairs Downstairs ended after just nine episodes in March 2012.

Jean was appointed an OBE in 2012. Her death at the age of 90 was announced in April. Sir Michael Lindsay-Hogg paid tribute to her as "wise and funny... very pretty and kind, and talented both as an actress and writer", adding she that she had died "peacefully in bed looked after by one of her very loving carers."

Jean Marsh always remained proud of her own working-class origins and considered Upstairs, Downstairs to have been her biggest achievement. To her, the enduring appeal of the series was simple: "We like it," she said, "because the past is not as worrying as the news."

The Sound of Silver

Barry Collings on the rediscovery of the rare single Lost Summer Love

Aged 13, Lorraine Silver recorded a song that would become popular on the northern soul and scooter scenes.

As a young child, Lorraine Silver's first love had always been to sing. During the summer holidays in 1964, Lorraine and a friend went up to Oxford Street, where she found a Woolworths store with a disc recording booth. Never missing an opportunity to sing, she deposited her two shillings into the machine and gave a hearty a capella version of Brian Hyland's Sealed With a Kiss.

Having serious faith in her efforts, 13-year-old Lorraine marched into PYE Records with this rough a capella disc and politely asked if anyone would like to listen to it. Two months later, Lorraine excitedly received a letter from Tony Reeves, a member of PYE's A&R department, asking her to attend an audition. The outcome of this was an immediate two-year recording contract with Reeves producing the four tracks in the studio.

Lorraine was originally destined to record I'll Keep Holding On, which had been released by the Marvelettes in the US, but at the last minute, a different song was chosen. She was given a slow ballad by American songstress Shelley Fabares to cover. The tempo was raised, a big band was hired – which included Klaus Voormann, who would go on to design the cover for the Beatles' Revolver album, on bass – and Lost Summer Love was born.

For a brief moment, Lorraine was famous, appearing in the press and receiving frequent airplay on Radio Luxembourg. Appearing on the radio show Ready Steady Radio, which was broadcast live from the Marquee Club, it was here that she met many other stars of the period including Lulu. Tales of such events made Lorraine a heroine among her school friends who shared in her excitement and weren't even jealous when she was allowed to miss lessons for more glamorous things such as photo sessions and interviews.

Lorraine was on the verge of an appearance on Ready Steady Go!, which could have thrust her into national stardom. However, when the Overlanders' Michelle began to shoot up the charts, Lorraine, who shared an agent with the group, was forced to let them take her prime time television spot.

Only 500 copies of Lost Summer Love were ever pressed and it wasn't until February 1988, 23 years after the original recording had been made, that Lorraine discovered her single on a list of popular northern soul tracks, compiled by DJ Nick Gregg of Warrington for Blues & Soul Magazine. She rang the Editor of Blues & Soul in disbelief and was flabbergasted when she discovered it really was her song. It was a great thrill to find out that she was a star, even if only to a specific group of people.

Contacting PYE, Lorraine was told that, in 1978, northern soul DJ Russ Winstanley had licensed her track for his label Casino Classics, and about 34,000 copies of Lost Summer Love had been sold worldwide. She could now claim her royalties, although she was paid according to the terms of her original contract, which was in old pence, so no fortune there. Lorraine shrugged off her losses, though, as she had derived so much pleasure and excitement from her experiences that the small amount of money she did get was a bonus.

Lost Summer Love is still a much-loved record on the northern soul and scooter scenes and is featured on numerous download and CD compilations. Original PYE label copies are extremely rare and are sought after by record collectors, changing hands for around £900.

Lost Summer Love is now playlisted on Boom Radio, and Lorraine is currently touring nationwide as special guest with northern soul band the Signatures, as part of the theatre show Northern Soul Live.

Northern Soul Live

14 June
Lytham St Annes, Lowther Pavilion
21 June
Milton Keynes, Stables
12 September
Bury St Edmunds, Apex
13 September
Newark, Warner Thoresby Hall
26 September
Epsom, Playhouse
16 October
Great Yarmouth, Vauxhall Holiday Park
25 October
Wimborne, Tivoli Theatre
31 October
Hull, Truck Theatre
1 November
Stamford, Corn Exchange
14 November
Eastleigh, Concorde

For further information and additional Northern Soul Live dates, go to lorrainesilver.com

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The Trolleybus Museum

Electric road vehicles aren't new! Come and ride on buses that ran on mains electricity, but disappeared from Britain's streets decades ago.

Founded in 1969 on part of a former wartime RAF station to house, restore and run trolleybuses when they were fast disappearing from Britain's streets, the museum has grown from a handful of vehicles and now has over 50, with plenty of plans for expansion.

But it's not just buses – the museum also has a toy museum, a replica cycle shop and other attractions a replica pre-fab home, play areas for the youngsters, a lecture theatre/cinema showing videos and the Tea Trolley Cafe.

For more information, visit: https://sandtoft.org

Somerset & Dorset Railway

Come and ride on the iconic Somerset & Dorset Railway at Midsomer Norton, in the heart of the Mendip Hills.

The Victorian station and signal box have been restored, and the aim is to recreate the feel of a country station in the 1950s.

The group operates trains on approximately one mile of railway, which runs as far as the infilled cutting near to Chilcompton tunnel in the south. Planning is taking place to explore the potential to expand the line in both directions, and visitors' two mile round trips will either be on the DMU, or in the Mark 1 coaches hauled by a diesel shunter. For something different, why not ride the Wickham Trolley along the line?

When there, make sure you visit the museum, wartime pillbox, shop and buffet. For full details visit www.sdjr.co.uk

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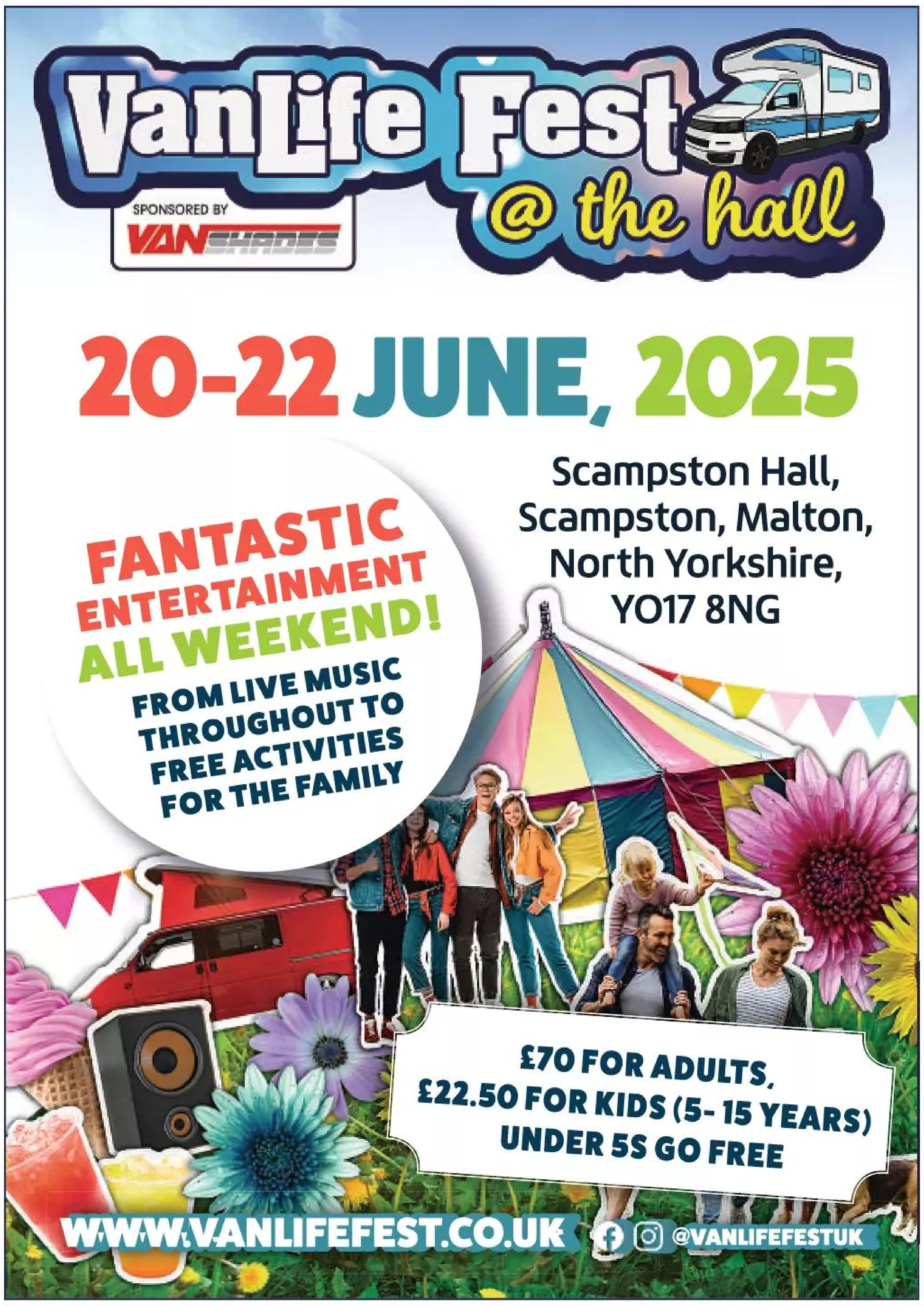
Sittingbourne's Steam Railway

On the weekend of May 31 / June 1, Sittingbourne's Steam Railway will be taken over by the Sheppey Pirates – there will be shooting and loud bangs. Captain Jack Sparrow will be there on the Sunday.

The railway then builds its biggest event of the year – the Railway 200 Steam & Beer Music Festival on June 28/29th; steam and diesel) trains, beer and music. Local bands will be providing the music and have been challenged to perform one railway-related song each. Trains depart Sittingbourne viaduct from 11am both days and until 10pm on Saturday and 6pm on Sunday.

The railway recently launched a fundraiser to buy an ex-MoD battery-electric locomotive and three clamshell wagons which will be converted to ballast wagons to help the track gang.

The group is also celebrating 120 years of steam locomotion at Sittingbourne Paper Mill, in fact the first loco to be operated in 1905 was *Premier*, which is the line's main steam locomotive this year. Visit www.sklr.net, call 01795 424899 or email info@sklr.net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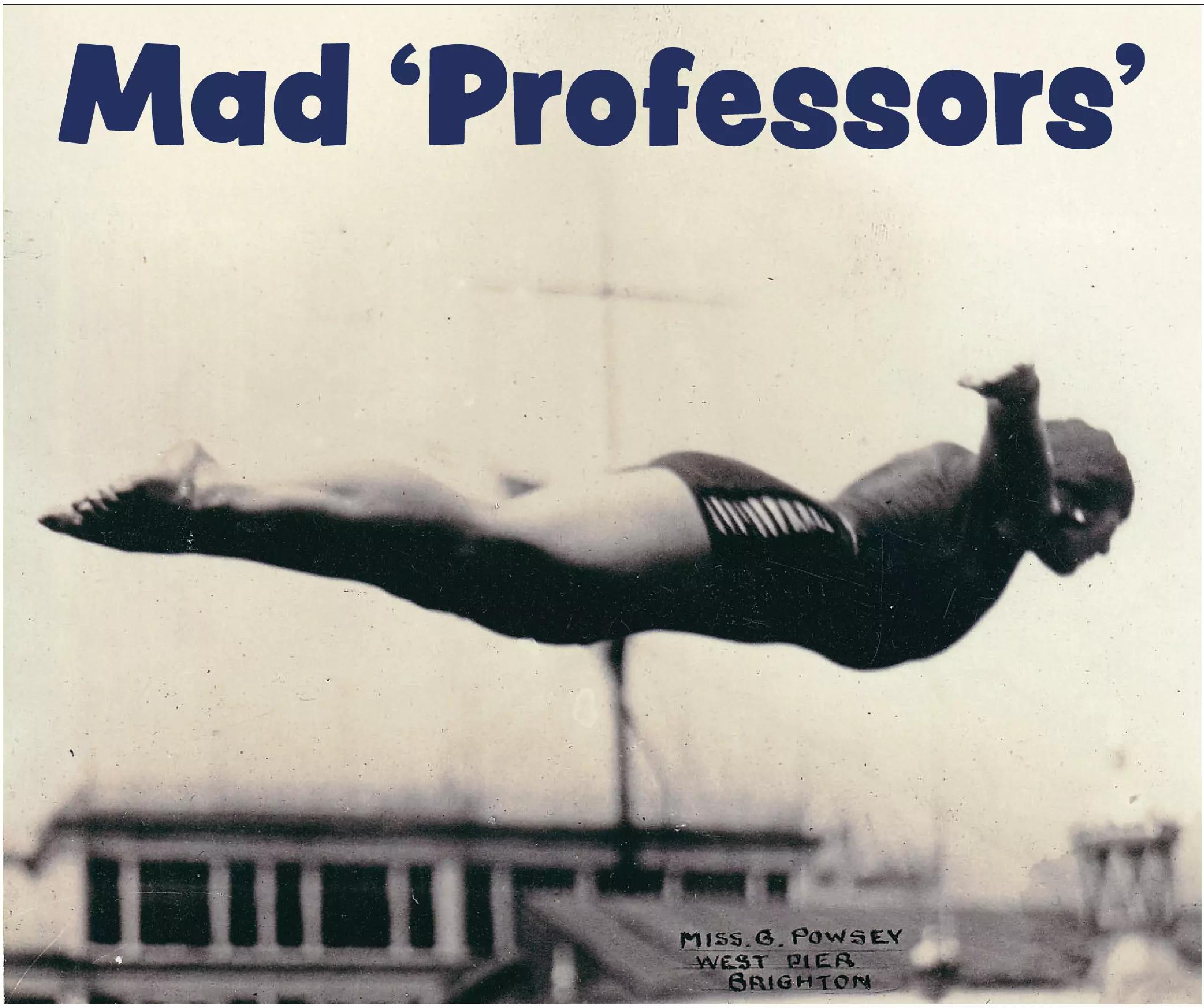
Mad ‘Professors’



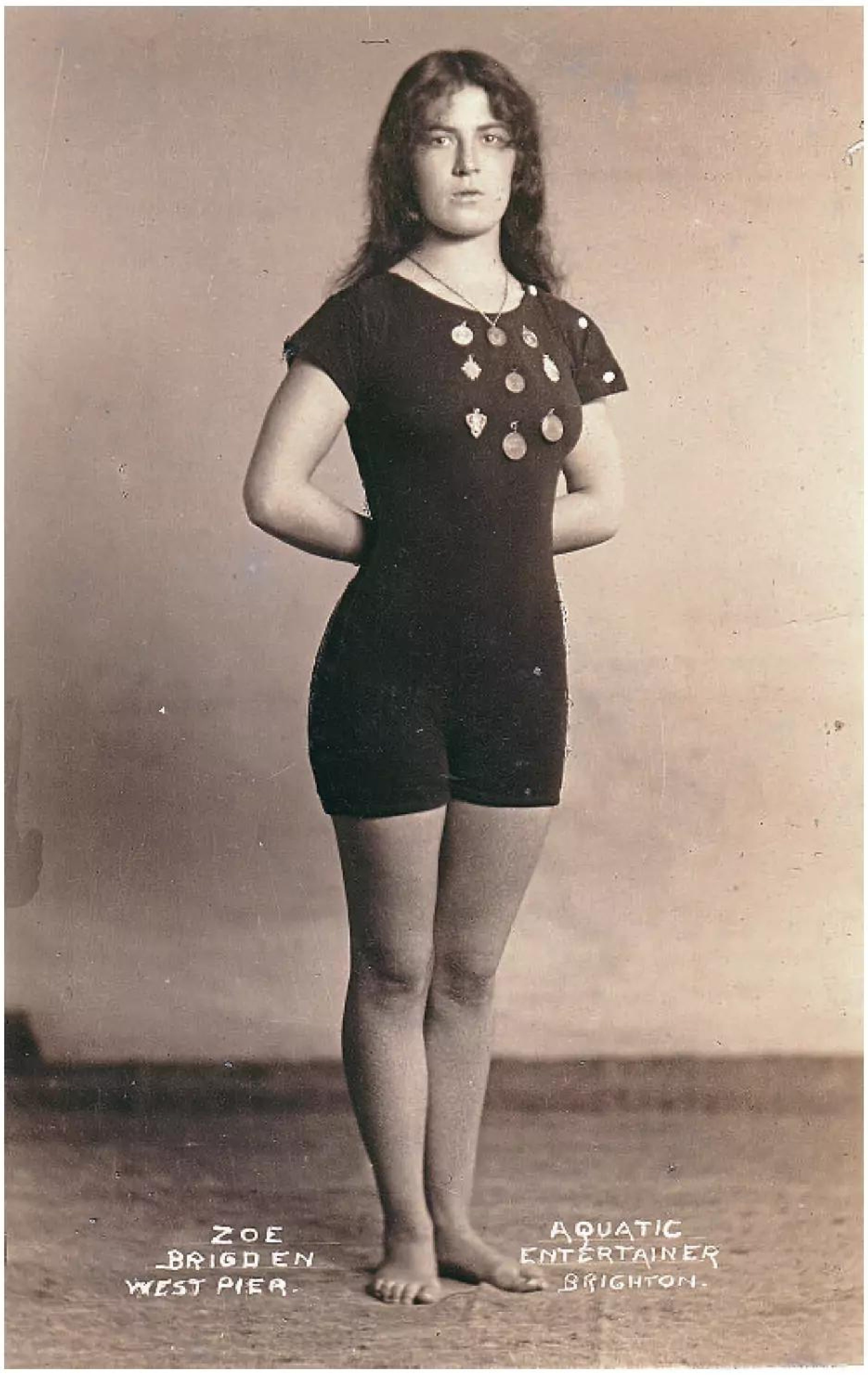
Margaret Brecknell recounts the exploits of Brighton’s forgotten pier divers

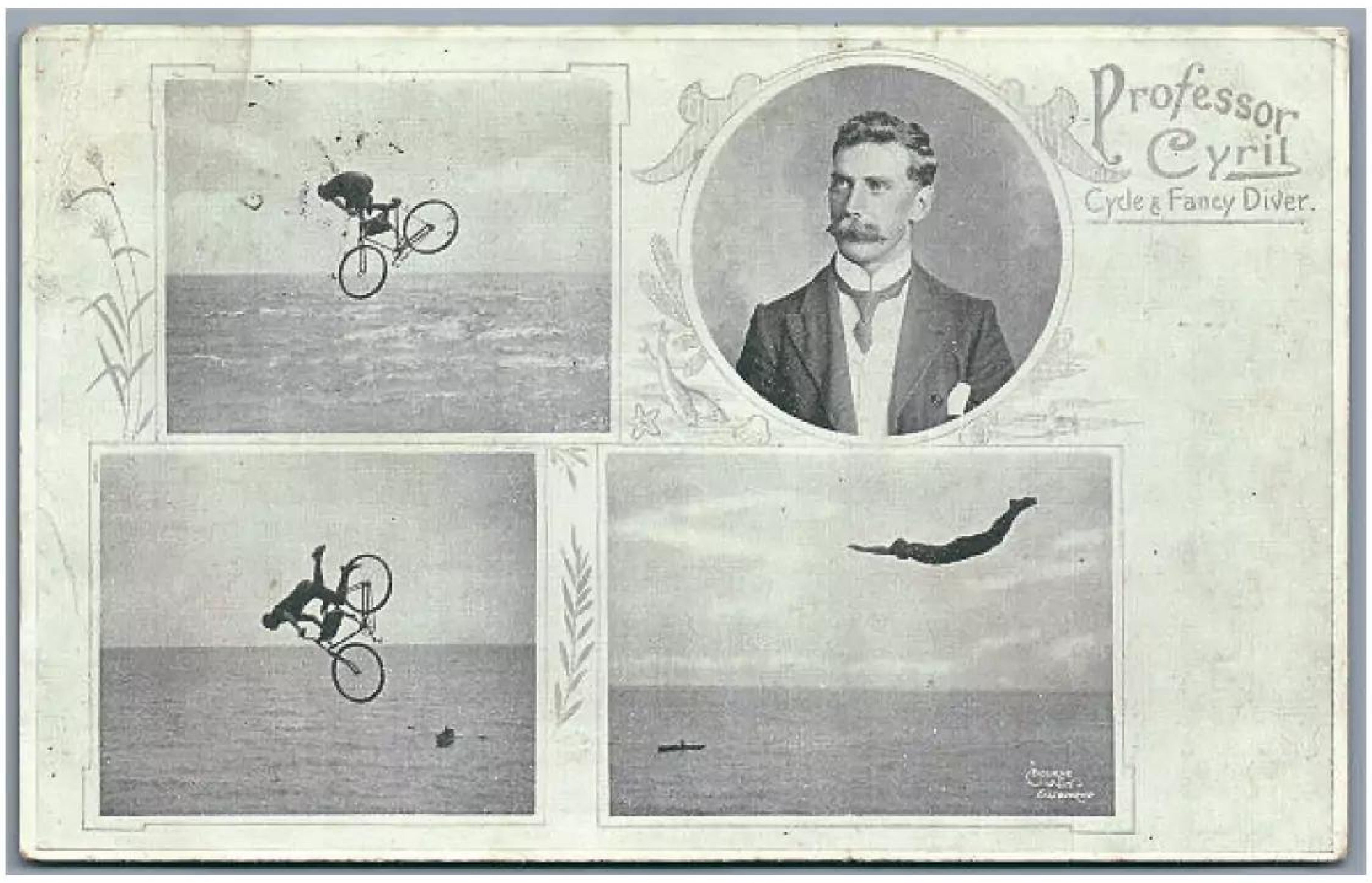
Back in the early 20th century, thousands of holidaymakers used to visit Brighton each summer, many of whom arrived on the train from London for a rare day out. The resort also attracted a wide variety of performers, all hoping to earn money from this readymade audience. These included the acrobatic high divers whose spectacular daily feats of daring at the pierhead particularly captured the public imagination. Known professionally as the “Professors”, performers such as Edward Reddish, Albert Heppell and Walter Tong became huge hits with the Brighton crowds, but sadly not all emerged unscathed from their death-defying acts.

Still a popular tourist attraction today, Brighton Palace Pier was constructed in 1899 as a replacement for the earlier Royal Suspension Chain Pier. Having opened in 1866, the nearby West Pier was already popular with visitors and was known for staging regular performances by accomplished divers.

Liverpool-born Edward Reddish proved a particular early favourite with spectators. He appeared for several summers during the 1880s, before deciding to form his own highly successful troupe of aquatic performers and tour the continent where his “water pantomimes” proved particularly popular. By the time he returned to perform regularly at Brighton in 1901, the now 43-year-old diver’s repertoire included the spectacular bicycle or “flying the foam” stunt. A fascinating early silent film from 1902 survives of Reddish in action, as he rides his Beeston Humber bicycle down a precipitously steep ramp before hurtling off the end of the West Pier into the chilly waters below.

When Reddish subsequently moved along the coast to perform in Worthing, Professor Powsey replaced him at Brighton. Born in 1866, Albert “Bert” Powsey had staged lively diving displays at Herne Bay Pier in his native Kent for several years before his move to East Sussex. Like his predecessor, Powsey was a notable exponent of the “Monte Cristo sack trick”, a daring feat of escapology in which the performer was tied up in a weighted sack and flung into the sea only to free himself and re-emerge moments later unscathed.





Opposite: In the interwar years, Gladys Powsey followed in her father's footsteps as a star diver on the West Pier. Left: Zoe Brigden enjoyed considerable success as an amateur swimmer before taking up a career as a professional high diver. Above: In May 1912, Brighton was rocked by the tragic death of the popular Albert Huggins Heppell (AKA Professor Cyril) while attempting a bicycle dive in front of a huge crowd.

The Professor also perfected the even more perilous "devil's dive". For this stunt, Powsey was wrapped tightly in sacking and cotton wool, which was then doused in petrol and set alight just as he was about to make his dive. Even though the stunt was carefully timed so the flames were extinguished in the nick of time when the diver hit the water, it wasn't unusual for practitioners to suffer minor burns. After his stint as a performer in Brighton, Powsey moved north and settled in Southport, Lancashire where he continued to defy the odds for several more decades, making his final performance in 1941 at the grand old age of 75.

Sadly, not all of Brighton's pier divers enjoyed such good fortune. In May 1912, the resort was rocked by the tragic death of the popular Albert Huggins Heppell (AKA Professor Cyril) while attempting a bicycle dive in front of a huge bank holiday crowd. A regular performer on the West Pier for the previous five years, Heppell had successfully completed the stunt many times but on that fateful day the front wheel of his bicycle came loose as he rode down the plank, causing him to swerve off course and hit his head on the deck after falling 25 feet. He suffered a traumatic brain injury and died shortly afterwards.

Press reports of the subsequent inquest provide a fascinating insight into the harsh day-to-day realities of earning a living from this most precarious of professions. The hearing was told that, on the morning in question, the diver had made a small repair to his bicycle – an apparently not uncommon occurrence. The Brighton Gazette reported Heppell's vehicle was "by no means a new one as the use to which it was put would have soon spoilt any cycle."

> **"If there was no risk, there would be no use in doing it."**

The evidence from the then pier master, Ernest Shirtliff, proved particularly revealing. He confirmed the diver was paid nothing by the pier management, instead making his living solely from the money collected from spectators during performances. Shirtliff also absolved the pier owners from any blame for Heppell's death, declaring the diver "took all the risk upon himself".

The unfortunate Heppell is reported to have been happy with this arrangement and to have commented that "if there was no risk, there would be no use in doing it," a daredevil approach that he shared with the other pier divers of his era. Yet, tellingly, in contrast to the likes of Professors Reddish and Powsey, who continued in the profession well into their later years, Heppell was reportedly intending to give up pier diving for good at the end of that summer after finding more stable employment as a postman.

Although the coroner accepted Shirtliff's argument that the West Pier Company could not be held responsible for Heppell's death, he did heavily criticise its management for allowing such dangerous performances to take place which merely "pandered to the morbid taste of the people and to sensationalism."

Despite these comments, pier-diving performances soon resumed in the resort. Billed as a "professional diver and lifesaving champion", Bolton-born Walter Tong became the West Pier's new aquatic entertainer only a month or so after the inquest's conclusion. With his impressive lifesaving credentials, Tong may well have been chosen as Heppell's successor to illustrate the management's commitment to improving safety standards on the pier. He did, however, display the same fearless attitude as his predecessor by including the spectacular "Moleberg" reverse somersault dive in his repertoire.

With the outbreak of World War One, men like Tong and Jack Hurst, a popular diver on the rival Palace Pier, were called up for active service, but local woman Zoe Brigden soon became a favourite with the West Pier crowds. Born in 1891, Brigden enjoyed considerable success as an amateur swimmer before taking up a career as a professional high diver. The highlight of her act became her trademark "wooden soldier", in which, with arms firmly tucked by her side, she dived headfirst into the sea. The talented Brigden also proved a popular vocalist at the variety shows staged locally to entertain the troops during the war.

After giving birth to a son in early 1925, Brigden swapped diving for a more sedate career as a hairdresser. Having retired from her role as an aquatic performer in some haste, an extraordinary rumour circulated around the resort that she had died suddenly after swallowing an octopus egg during a performance on the West Pier. When the story resurfaced in a 1942 edition of the Daily Mirror, Brigden herself wrote to the paper to reassure its readers that she was feeling perfectly well and was the mother of a son serving in the forces. She eventually passed away in October 1983, having made it to the ripe old age of 92.

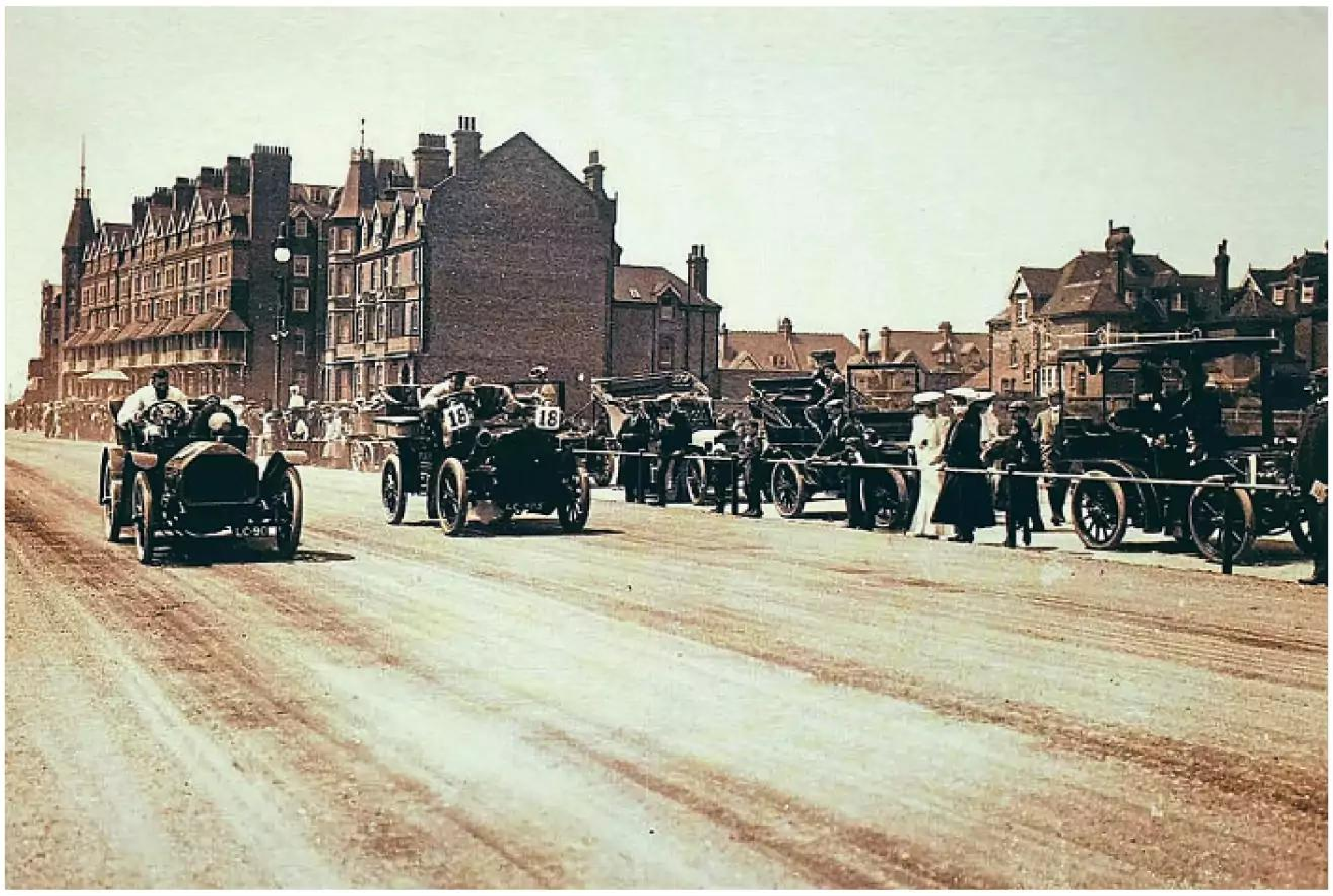
In the interwar years, two of Bert Powsey's children, Gladys and Herbert, followed in his footsteps as star divers on the West Pier. In an interesting early example of sport sponsorship, the Powsey family became engaged in a variety of promotional activities for Bovril. During performances, they would wear specially designed swimming costumes with the company's name emblazoned across the chest. Spectators also recalled that Gladys would advertise the beverage by sipping it during intervals and declaring: "I always drink Bovril – it helps prevent that sinking feeling."

Only a tiny fraction of Brighton's once impressive West Pier remains standing, and the exploits of its daring acrobatic divers have been all but forgotten. Yet, these cultural icons of the early 20th century led the way in the development of the south coast town into one of the country's most popular seaside resorts.

Should any reader have information about the pier divers which they are willing to share with Margaret Brecknell, please contact her at mabauthor@outlook.com

THE ENGLISH MONTE CARLO

Michael Montagu visits Bexhill-on-Sea, home to the UK's first motor racing festival

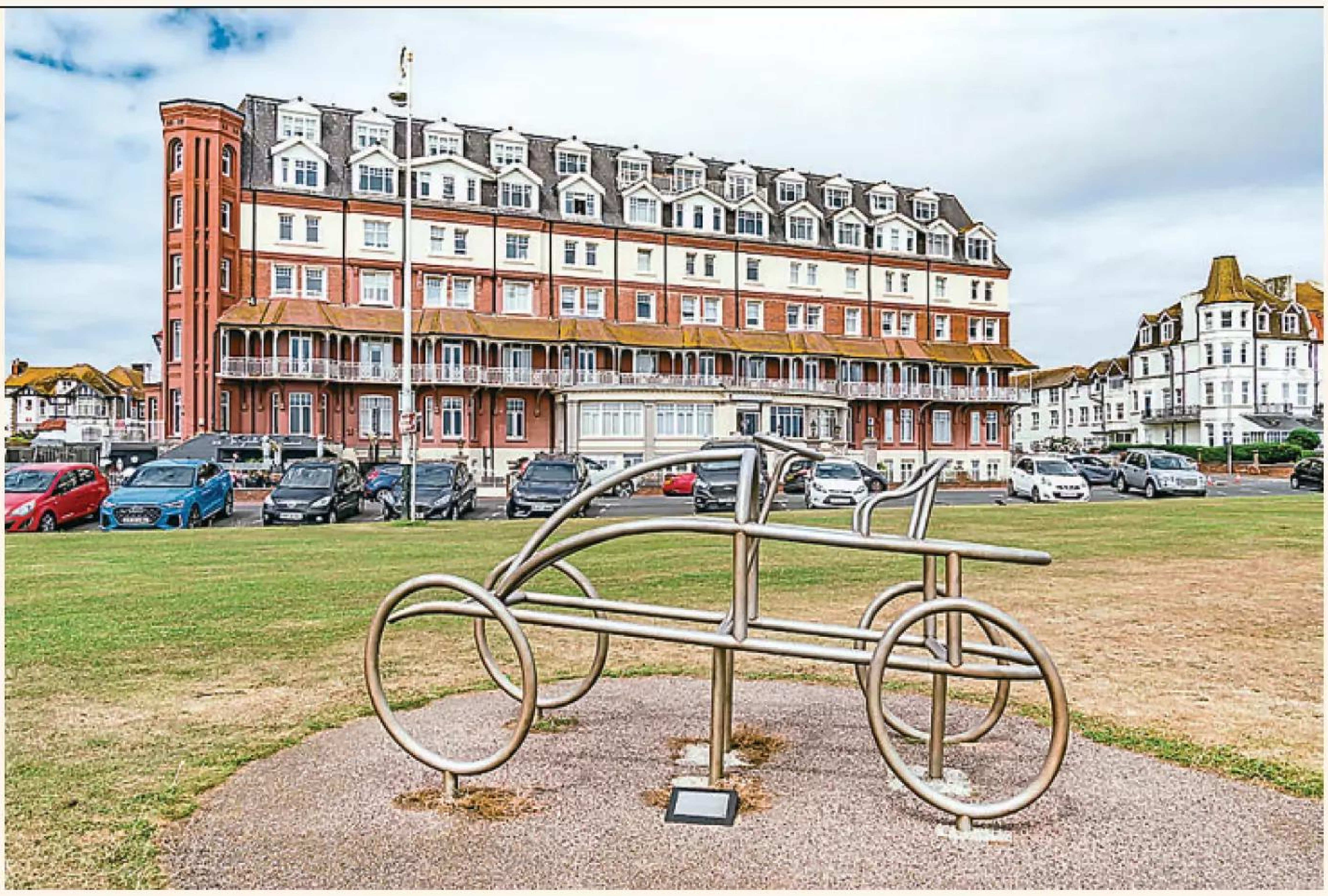


Top: Motor racing at Bexhill-on-Sea attracted crowds in their thousands, with the extra business pleasing the owners of local hotels and guest houses.

What comes into your head when you think of Monte Carlo? The sparkling blue Mediterranean, sunshine, gambling, life deluxe in a premier tax haven? Or perhaps you recall what William Somerset Maugham said about Monte Carlo and the French Riviera in general? "A sunny place for shady people." Now, what does Bexhill-on-Sea in East Sussex conjure up for you? Grey skies, a pebbly beach and the modernist style De La Warr Pavilion, seen in Poirot's ABC Murders? When there recently, there was a touch of the Mediterranean. The sun was shining, the sea was blue, and my friend and I enjoyed excellent coffee and homemade cake in a little beachside cafe.

However, to those who know Bexhill now, it may be somewhat mind-stretching to realise that the 7th Earl De La Warr tried to turn it into the English Monte Carlo. The first recorded reference to Bexhill, then called Bexelei, was in a charter of King Offa of Mercia in AD792, when he built a church. The Domesday Book of 1086 tells us that before the Norman Conquest of 1066, the manor was worth £20. By 1086 that had decreased to £18 10*s* and was described as "waste".

Queen Elizabeth I became owner of the manor in 1561, giving it in 1564 to Sir Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset. Later, the Sackville family was advanced to dukes of Dorset. They owned Bexhill until the middle of the 19th century. In 1813, Elizabeth Sackville married the 5th Earl De La Warr. The Dorset dukedom died out through lack of male heirs in 1865, so Lord and Lady De La Warr found themselves owners of a small seaside settlement.



Left: With a shareholding in Dunlop, Gilbert Sackville, 8th Earl De La Warr was keen to promote sports that used rubber tyres. Right: A sculpture depicting Leon Serpollet's steam-driven car, Easter Egg, was unveiled in 2002 to mark the centenary of Bexhill-on-Sea's original motor races.

Photograph: (Sackville) National Portrait Gallery London, (Sculpture) Creative Commons/Ian Capper

Reginald Sackville became the 7th Earl De La Warr in 1873. A Church of England clergyman, he was chaplain to Queen Victoria between 1846-65. He was also a rich landowner and a man with an ambition, to turn Bexhill into a fashionable seaside resort. To be, in fact, the English Monte Carlo.

To some extent he was following the plans of the Duke of Devonshire, who owned, and developed, much of Eastbourne, some miles to the west of Bexhill. To begin with, he hired the south London builder John Webb, who built the first sea wall, which De La Warr saw as essential to his plans. He also built the De La Warr Parade. As a partial payment for his work, Webb was given land south of the railway, on which he developed houses. This became known as Egerton Park Estate.

The East Parade was built in 1883 and was the private estate of the earls between 1895-1913. It housed hotels, the Kursaal, little kiosks and a golf course. The Kursaal was completed in 1896 and intended to offer the best entertainment to the best people. The main hotel, the Sackville, was built as four houses but incorporated into one, opening in July 1890. The opening was really the beginning of Bexhill becoming a fashionable resort. Lord De La Warr's heir, his son, Viscount Cantaloupe (sometimes spelt Cantelupe), lived there until he and his wife moved to their main home, the manor house, in 1892.

The viscount became the 8th earl in 1896. He was interested in cycling and included a shareholding in the Dunlop rubber company among his investments, so ideal for promoting sports that used rubber tyres. He had a bicycle track laid out, with a cyclists' cabin at the east end of the De La Warr Parade. This was another point to attract more well-heeled people to Bexhill. Cycling was a new craze; even Victorian women donned specially made bloomers and took to the wheel. Smart private schools were moving into Bexhill, because it had a reputation for healthy, bracing air. More schools meant more wealthy people staying in hotels.

In 1902, Bexhill was granted the first royal charter of the new king, Edward VII, making Bexhill an incorporated borough. Although the last Sussex town to receive that status, it was the first time a royal charter was delivered to its recipients by car. In celebration, Lord De La Warr arranged the first motor racing festival in the country, in conjunction with the Automobile Club of Great Britain and Ireland. De La Warr turned the Bicycle Boulevard into the racetrack and, being his own land, it was exempt from the national speed limit of 14mph.

The racing was seen as an inducement to attract wealthy overseas visitors. Certainly, the event attracted crowds in their thousands. Local hotels and guest houses were pleased with the extra business.

Among the 200 entries for the races were some of the best-known names of the time. One of them was the founder of the Daily Mail newspaper, Lord Northcliffe, driving his Mercedes. The overall winner, with an incredible speed of 59mph, was Leon Serpollet from France, driving his steam-driven car named "Easter Egg".

Lord De La Warr was delighted by the success of his event, and his plan was to make Bexhill not just the English Monte Carlo, but the epicentre of British motor racing. His plans, set out by 1906, were for a course that would go nearly as far as Beachy Head, outside Eastbourne, with its own hotels, restaurants and garages. Sadly, for Bexhill, they never came to fruition, with Brooklands, at Weybridge in Surrey, taking over from 1907. Some races were still held at Bexhill, but they ended after the 1925 season, and then the Royal Automobile Club would not issue more permits for racing on public roads. There is an interesting display about Bexhill's racing glory days at Bexhill Museum (01424 222058, bexhillmuseum.org.uk)Founded in 1914, the museum is on Egerton Road, near the seafront.

With the outbreak of World War Two, the glory days for Bexhill came to an end. The town was damaged by German bombs and many of the private schools were evacuated away from what was, in reality, the front line and a target for invasion. After the war, some of the schools returned, but nowhere near as many as before. Part of the problem was that a large number of the schools had housed pupils with parents serving in India, which after 1947 was no longer part of the British Empire.

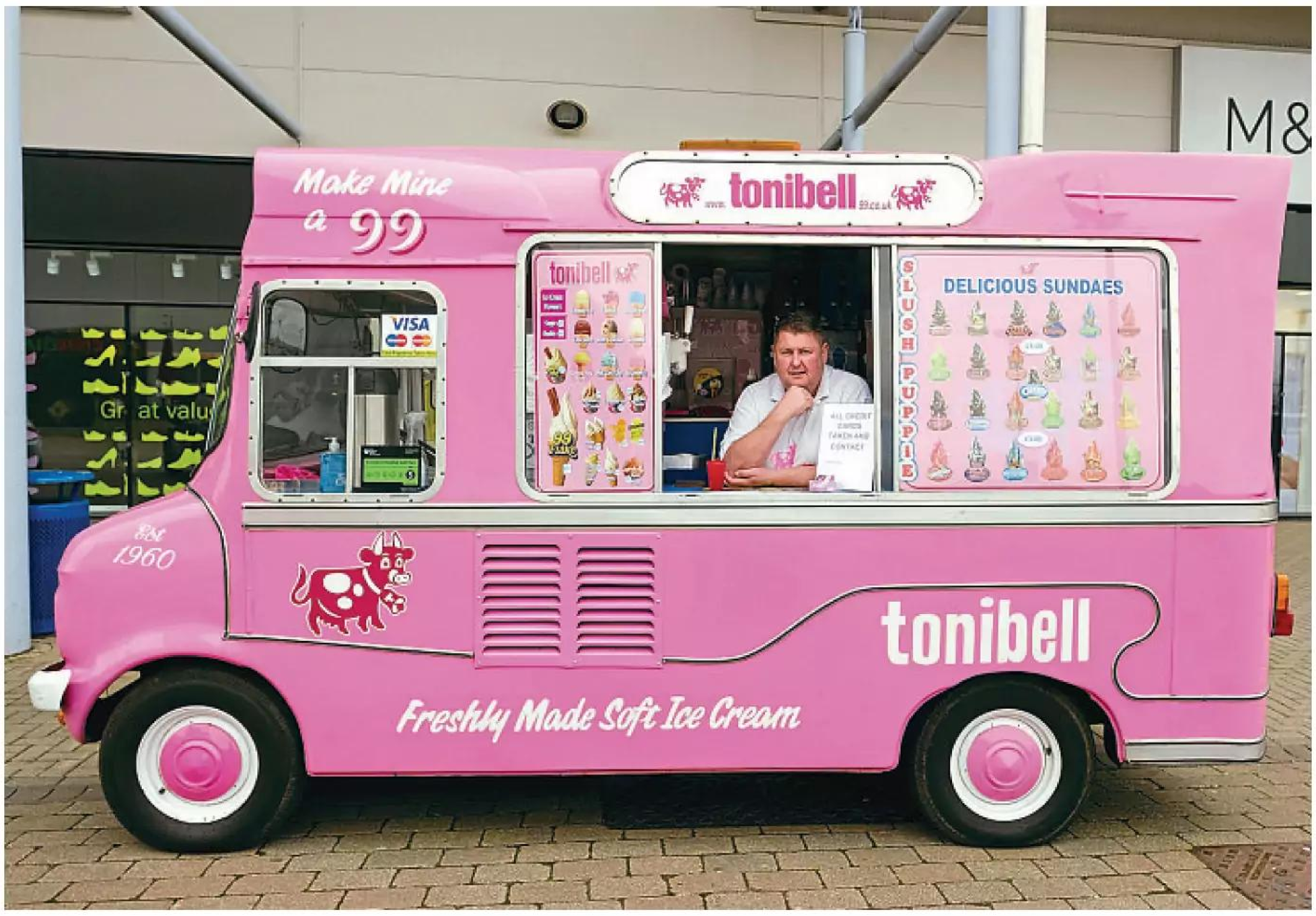
By the 1960s, Bexhill was mostly residential while overseas package holidays meant tourists went away for guaranteed sun and adventure. This put the local economy into a decline. Pleasant in parts, particularly the old town and some of the seafront, but certainly not Monte Carlo.

FOOD & DRINK

TASTES GONE BY AND THE FLAVOURS OF TODAY

Last Vans Standing

Simon Stabler celebrates 65 years of Tonibell


Make Mine a 99
tonibell
VISA
DELICIOUS SUNDAES
SLUSH PUPPIE
Est 1960
tonibell
Freshly Made Soft Ice Cream
M&

Above: Ice-cream man Gary Rich, pictured in a vintage Bedford CF conversion, operates the last Tonibell vans.

What would you consider to be the sound of the summer? Chilled-out music? The knock of leather on willow? Or perhaps the chimes of an ice-cream van?

We have Ron Peters to thank for bringing the ice-cream chime to the UK, one of several innovations he introduced during his time in charge of Tonibell, one of the country's best-known ice-cream retailers.

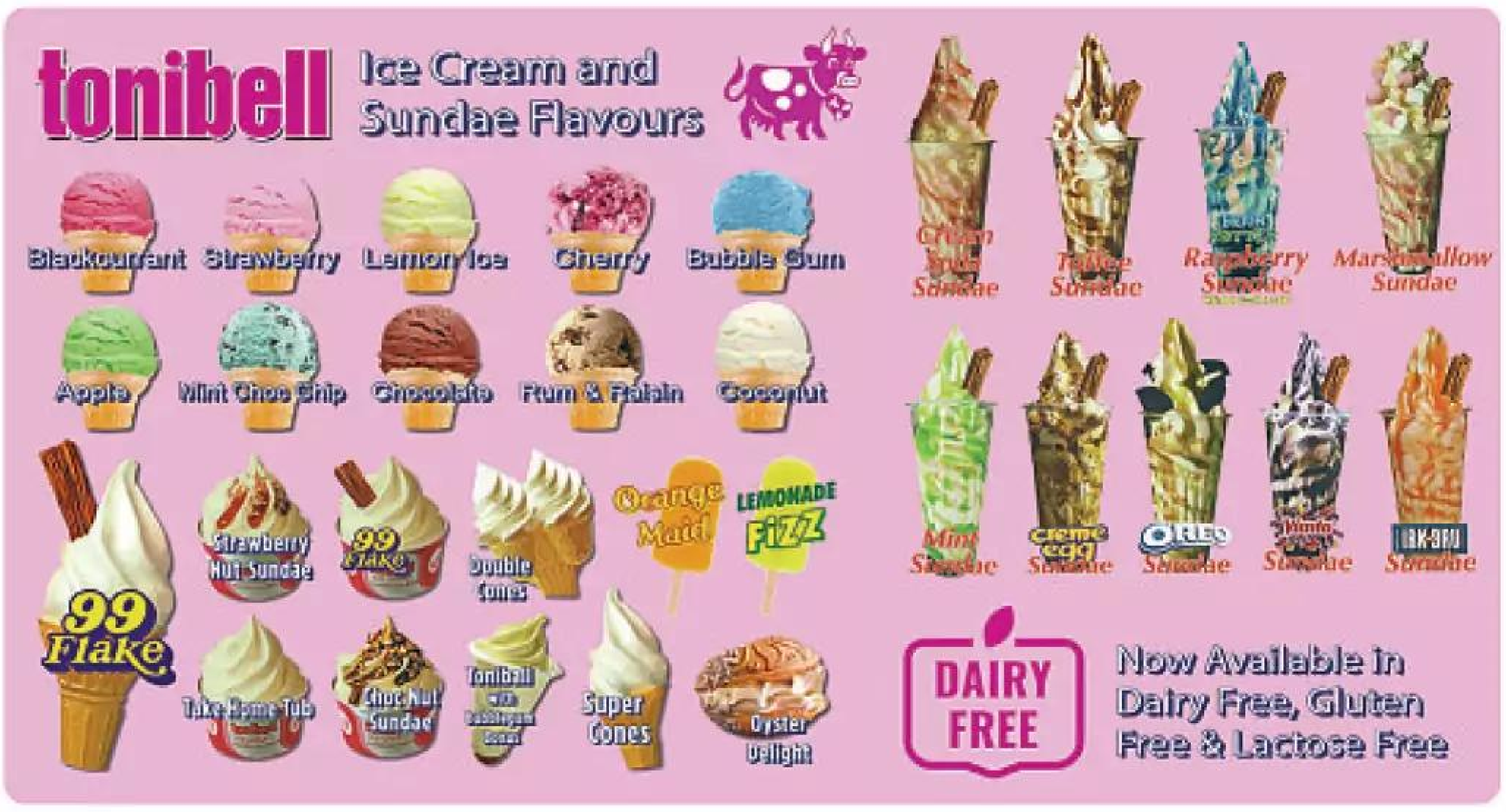
The company began in 1937, when Ron's father, Italian-born Toni Pignatelli (Ron himself had been born Romualdo Pignatelli), founded the ice-cream manufacturing business Toni's Cream Ices. With Ron on board, the company went from strength to strength, opening a couple of shops in addition to a factory in Middlesex.

In 1960, the company rebranded as Tonibell, a combination of the name Toni with bellissima, the Italian word for very beautiful, and commissioned coachbuilders Graham Brothers of Enfield to build 100 ice-cream vans based on a Bedford CA 15 cwt chassis. Originally painted pale blue, it wasn't until 1970, six years after the company was taken over by British American Tobacco – as a way, unthinkable today, to promote its own products – that the vans were given their now familiar "hot" pink branding.

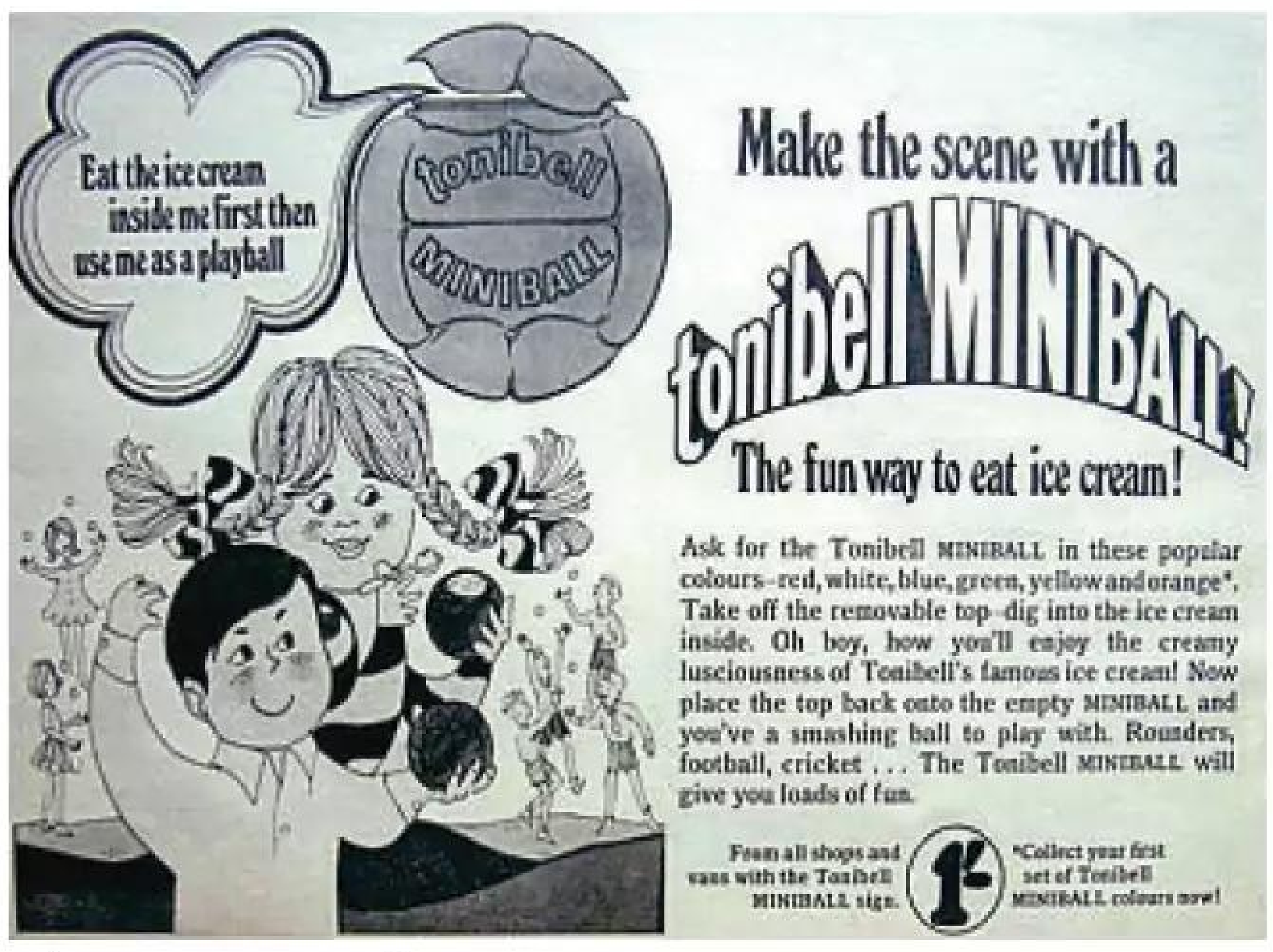
At its peak, there were 1,000 Tonibell vans operating across the UK, with the majority of franchisees in the south of England. Among them was Terry Rich, who began operating vans for Toni's in the 1950s. Today, led by son Gary and grandson Laine, the Riches are the sole operators of Tonibell vans.

Although still operating on the streets and fixed sites of the south of England, Tonibell's core business is attending public events and festivals, and private hire at weddings, birthday parties and company events. Tonibell's pink vans have even been known to attend funerals, with Laine having the honour of being part of the funeral procession for Ron Peters' business partner George Le Gresley.

In addition to its modern electric fleet, Tonibell has a collection of lovingly restored vintage vans including Bedford CAs and CFs, along with the ultra-rare Ford Transit MK1s. Many of these vehicles could


tonibell
Ice Cream and Sundae Flavours
Blackcurrant
Strawberry
Lemon Ice
Cherry
Bubble Gum
Apple
Mint Choc Chip
Chocolate
Rum & Raisin
Coconut
99 Flake
Strawberry Nut Sundae
99 Flake
Double Cones
Orange Maid
Lemonade Fizz
Take Home Tub
Choc Nut Sundae
Tonibell
Super Cones
Oyster Delight
Toffee Sundae
Raspberry Sundae
Marshmallow Sundae
Mint Sundae
Creme Egg Sundae
Oreo Sundae
Vimto Sundae
Irn-Bru Sundae
DAIRY FREE
Now Available In Dairy Free, Gluten Free & Lactose Free

Left: Tonibell still sells many old favourites including sundaes and the ever-popular Flake 99 and Oyster Delight.


Eat the ice cream inside me first then use me as a playball
tonibell MINIBALL
Make the scene with a
tonibell MINIBALL!
The fun way to eat ice cream!
1/-

Ask for the Tonibell MINIBALL in these popular colours–red, white, blue, green, yellow and orange*. Take off the removable top–dig into the ice cream inside. Oh boy, how you'll enjoy the creamy lusciousness of Tonibell's famous ice cream! Now place the top back onto the empty MINIBALL and you've a smashing ball to play with. Rounders, football, cricket . . . The Tonibell MINIBALL will give you loads of fun.

From all shops and vans with the Tonibell MINIBALL sign.

*Collect your first set of Tonibell MINIBALL colours now!

Plans are under way to create an environmentally friendly version of the Tonibell Miniball, packaging that can be played with once the ice-cream it contains has been eaten.

often be seen or at least heard on TV in shows such as The Sweeney, Minder, Rentaghost and Grange Hill, and Tonibell continues to have links to the film and TV industry, where it is often called on to provide on-set catering to a production's cast and crew.

While you are still able to enjoy old favourites such as the 99 Flake, Oyster Delight, strawberry sundae, choc nut sundae, Popeye (an ice-cream cornet with a fruit ice lolly sticking out of it), Toniball (Tonibell's answer to the Screwball) and the famous Fruit Boat Cocktail, the company's commitment to the environment has seen innovations in the way they are sold and packaged. All of Tonibell's ice-cream tubs and sundaes are now sold in a pioneering Eco-Tub, the world's fastest decomposing ice-cream tub ("If you peel off the compostable wrapper, you can even eat the tub," explains Gary), while responsible waste management means that the vans leave behind little, if at all, evidence that they were there in the first place.

Gary, who is in the process of writing a book about Tonibell, is regularly asked if the company is ever going to reintroduce the Tonibell Miniball – a plastic ice-cream container, which, once the contents have been eaten, can be closed up and used as a ball to play rounders, football or cricket with.

"Yes, I am in the process of having the Miniball recreated in biodegradable form, so that today's children can experience what it was like back in the 1960s with no mobile phones or internet, when they knew what time it was by hearing our chimes as we were always on time." 🇬🇧

For further information on Tonibell, or to hire one of its vans for your event, go to tonibell99.co.uk or facebook.com/tonibell99

Rice au Custardo

When I went to junior school, I stopped for school dinners. I wasn't allowed to join a queue to be served. Senior boys got the dinners from the servery. The rest of us sat down at several long tables and waited for the meals to be brought to us. We were lucky, we had a boy who could carry four meals at a time. Everyone admired his skill.

I remember on one occasion we had whale meat. I don't know why or where it came from, but whaling was still legal in the 1940s. The first course usually came with a big dollop of mashed potato, so we had it with that. You can't get whale meat now, of course, but it's no great loss. It looked a bit like liver and was tough.

The pudding varied but one they often served was a mixture of rice and custard which one of my friends called "Rice au Custardo". This probably doesn't make sense in any known language.

I think we all know how to make regular rice pudding; rice, sugar, milk then into the oven for two hours. Making Rice au Custardo is a lot quicker. I can't be sure how it was done but this is my best guess: Take three tablespoons of washed rice, pour on boiling water, then boil for 15 mins until the rice is soft. Of course, it will have little taste to it at this point, because you haven't added sugar or milk, so the next bit is to make a pint of custard and then mix the strained cooked rice and custard together.

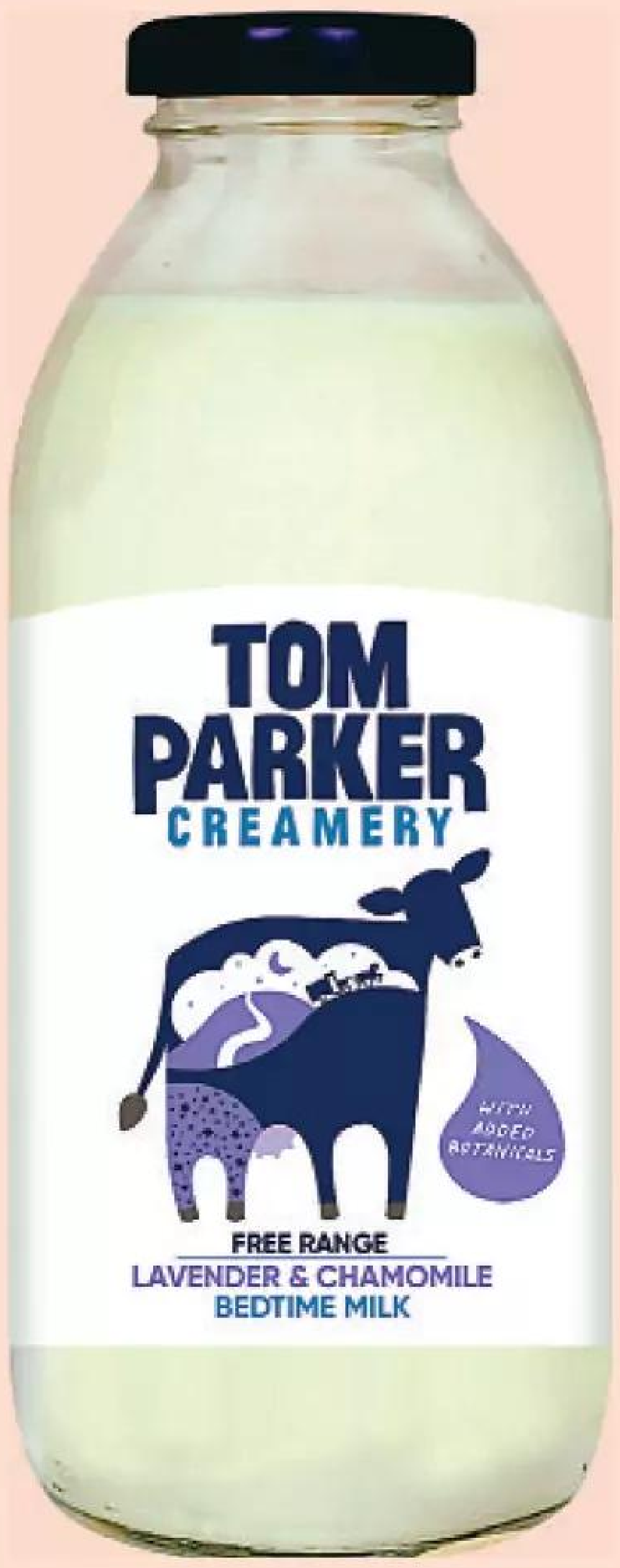
I have made and tried it again. It's yummy. If you have any left over, pop it into the fridge, it's quite nice cold too. If you like it, then tell your friends about this economical sweet.

Don Alcott, Shirley, Solihull

Sweet Creams

An award-winning Hampshire creamery that produces free-range milk and cream has launched a new product to help promote peaceful sleep. Tom Parker Creamery's Bedtime Milk has been created by infusing whole milk with chamomile, lavender, valerian root and magnolia, botanicals renowned for their calming and sleep-enhancing benefits.

To be enjoyed warm or cold, Tom Parker Creamery's Bedtime Milk is the latest in a line of high-quality, natural dairy products sourced from mixed breed grass-fed herds and the finest natural ingredients. Available from branches of Waitrose, Sainsbury and Tesco, as well as online from Milk & More, tomparkercreamery.com and Ocado, Tom Parker Creamery products are packaged in glass bottles and paper labels, reflecting the company's commitment to sustainability while evoking memories of Tom Parker's original milk deliveries.

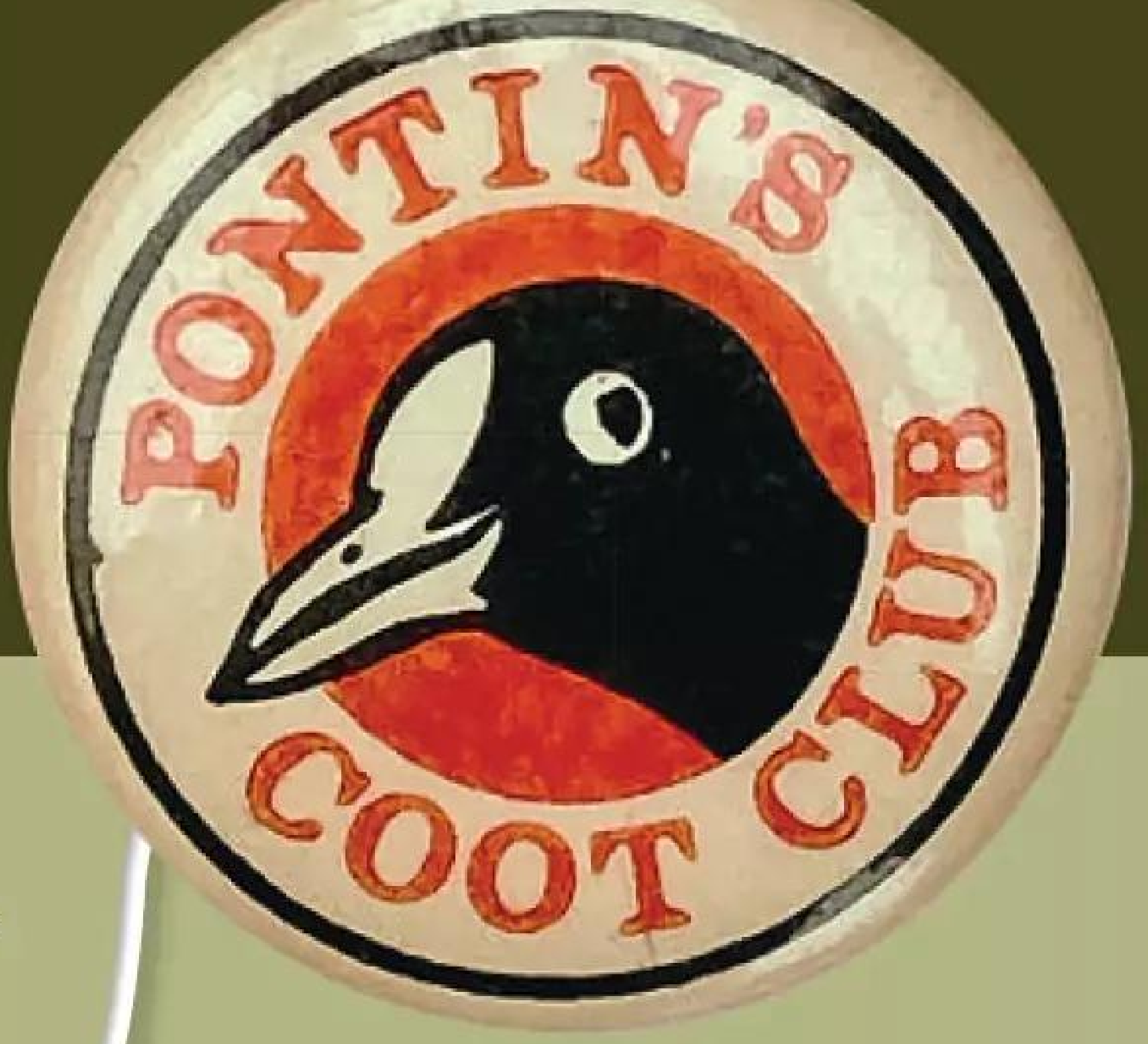


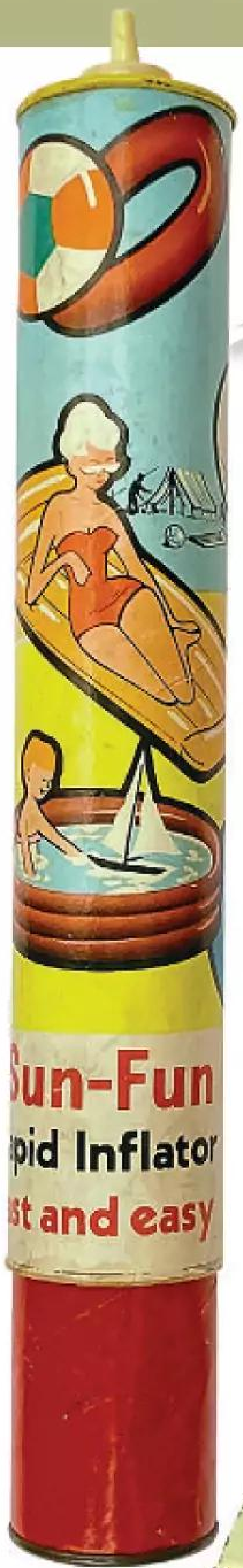
Lightly infused with chamomile, lavender, valerian root and magnolia, Tom Parker Creamery's Bedtime Milk can help drinkers to relax and drift off peacefully.

If you know of a regional delicacy that has all but died out or would like to share your food and drink memories, then let us know via info@bestofbritishmag.co.uk or at the address given on page 4.

TREASURES In the ATTIC

Brian Howes unearths some nostalgic collectables that might be discarded as worthless junk but actually have a value to today's collectors. Can you estimate what each object might be worth and pick out which one is the big-money item? **The values are printed on page 80.**



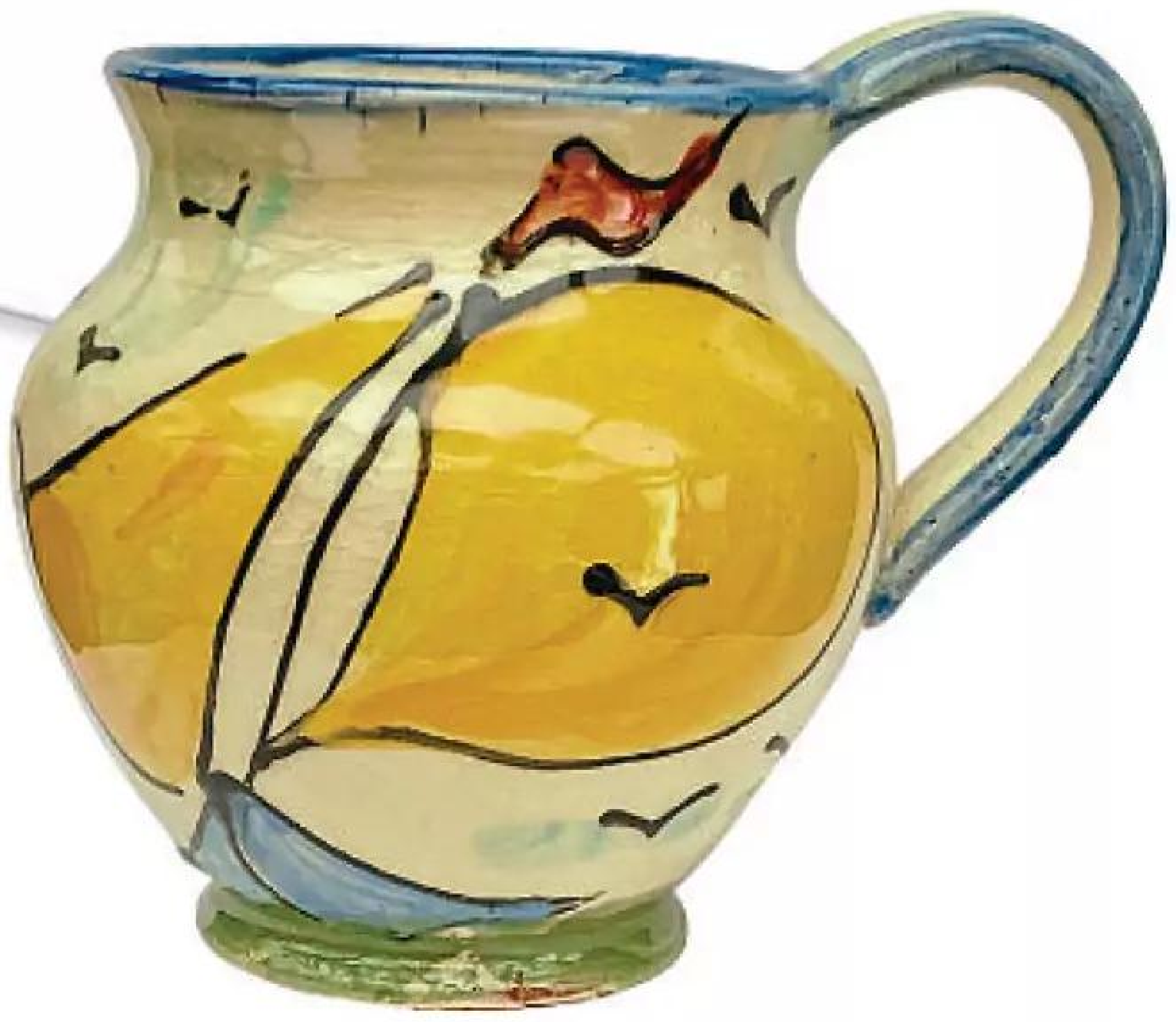


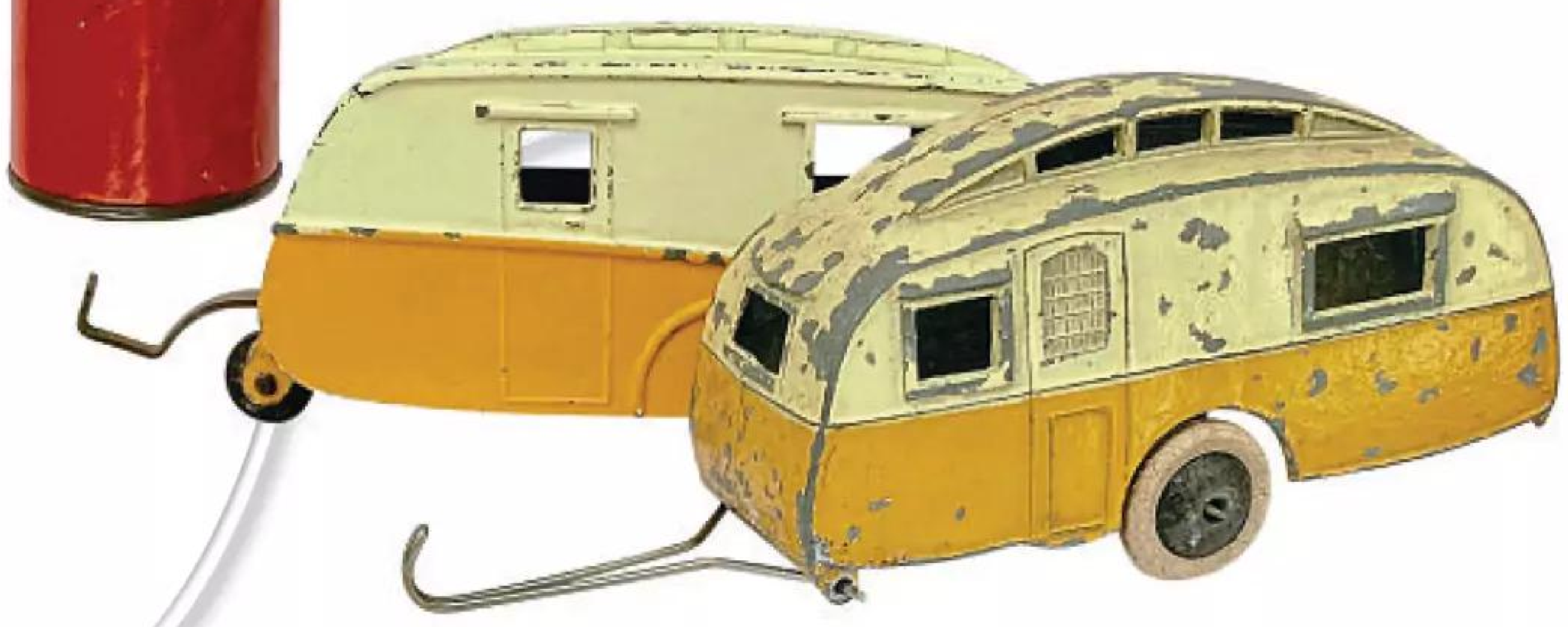
1 High inflation

Blowing up balloons, beach balls, lilos, paddling pools and rubber rings became much easier when you could buy these handy Sun-Fun rapid inflators for a couple of bob from Woolworths. Woolies was the go-to place for summer holiday items, including rubber swimming caps, snorkels and goggles. That was the wonder of Woolies.

2 Devonshire delight

This pretty little jug was made in the 1920s in Torbay, an area renowned for the manufacture of souvenir pottery pieces made from Devon clay. There were around 16 potteries dotted around Torquay, Paignton and Brixham from the 1860s through to the late 20th century making holiday souvenirs. Some pieces carried catchy mottos written in West Country dialect.





3 Vantastic

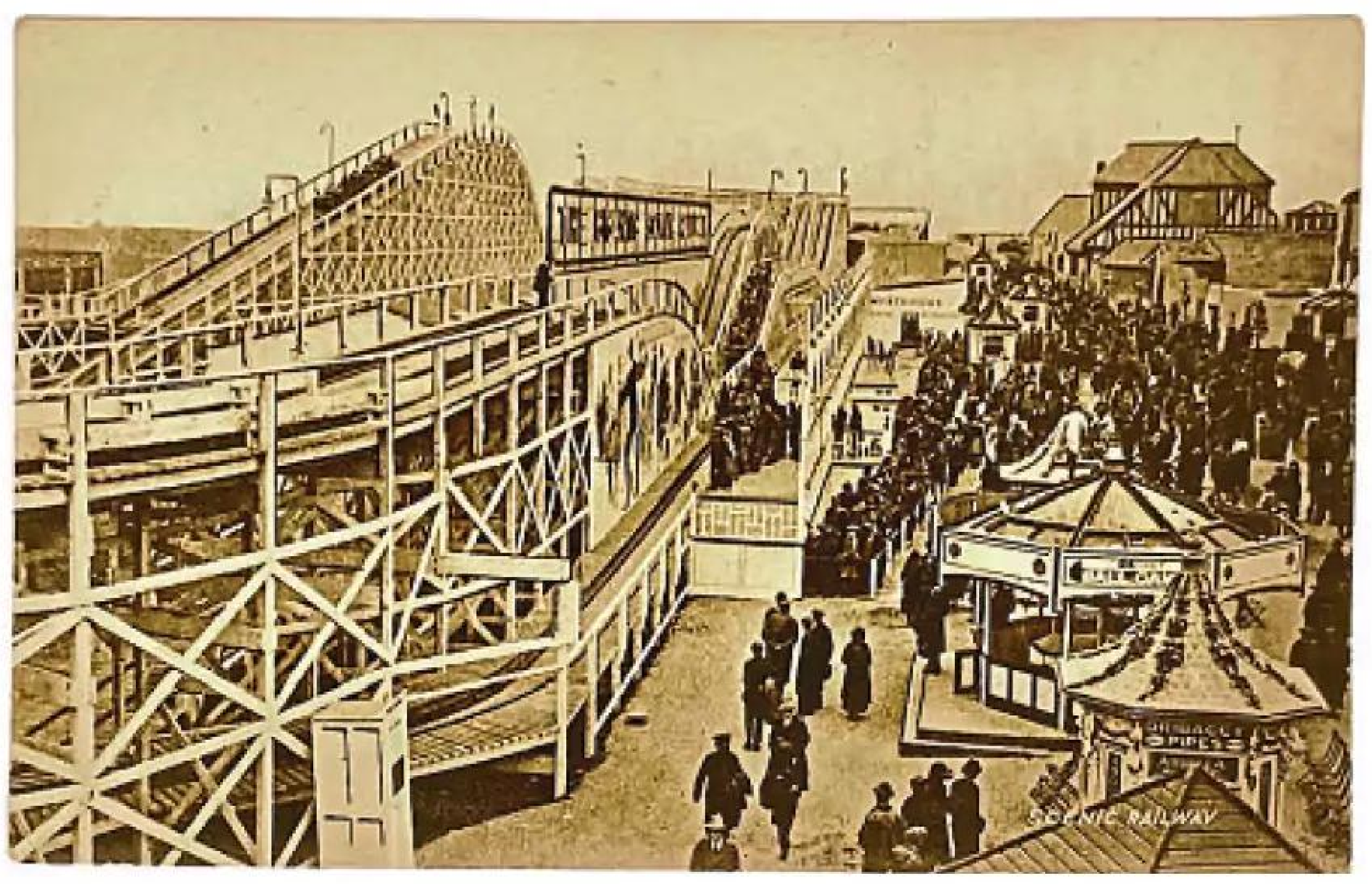
Many of my childhood holidays were spent staying in a little old caravan at Ingoldmells, near Skegness, on Lincolnshire's coast. They were such happy days. The caravans on site were all like these old Dinky Toys. The one at the front is a rare pre-war version with the larger, more modern 1950s version at the back.

4 Clubbing together

Holiday camp companies were famous for organising clubs offering games and activities to children staying on site during summer holidays. In the early 1960s, Pontins launched the Coot Club to keep youngsters occupied and issued these button badges to club members.

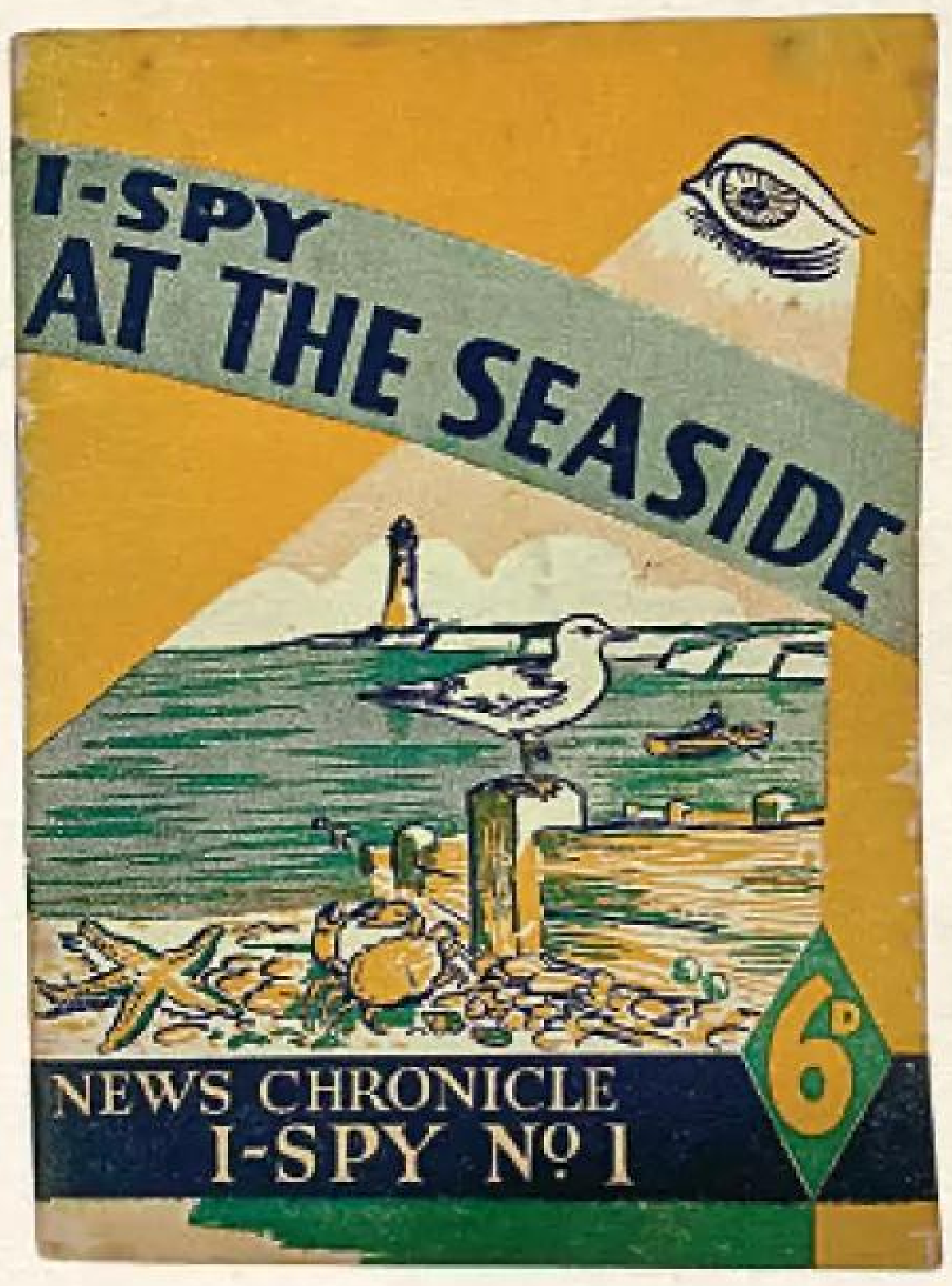
5 Riding high

Long before the arrival of theme parks and white-knuckle rides, scenic railways were the big attractions of the seaside pleasure grounds. By the 1930s, they had become known as big dippers with heavy wooden support structures beneath the iron tracks. This old postcard shows the wonderful scenic railway at Great Yarmouth, Norfolk in the 1920s.



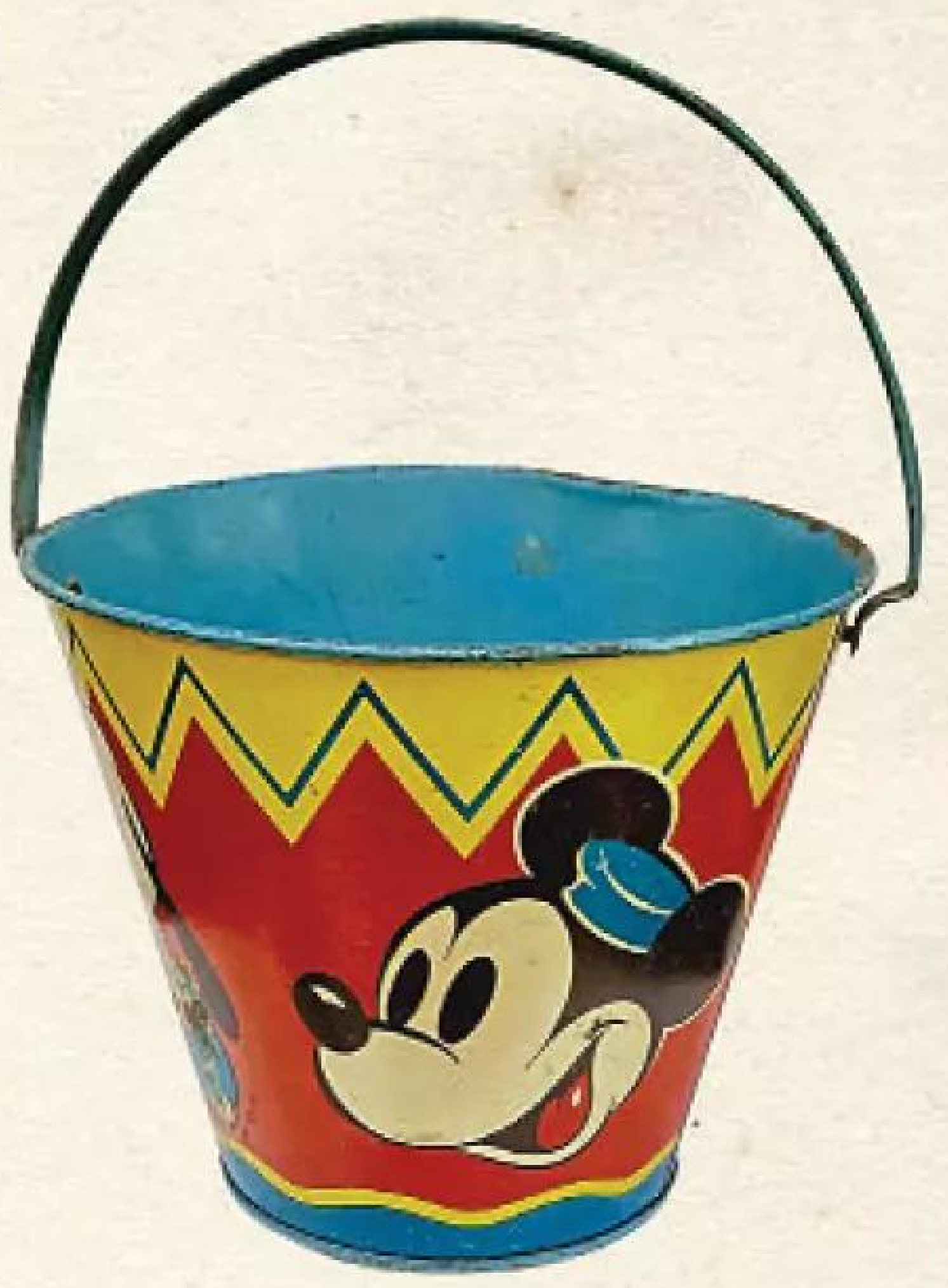
6 One of the Tribe

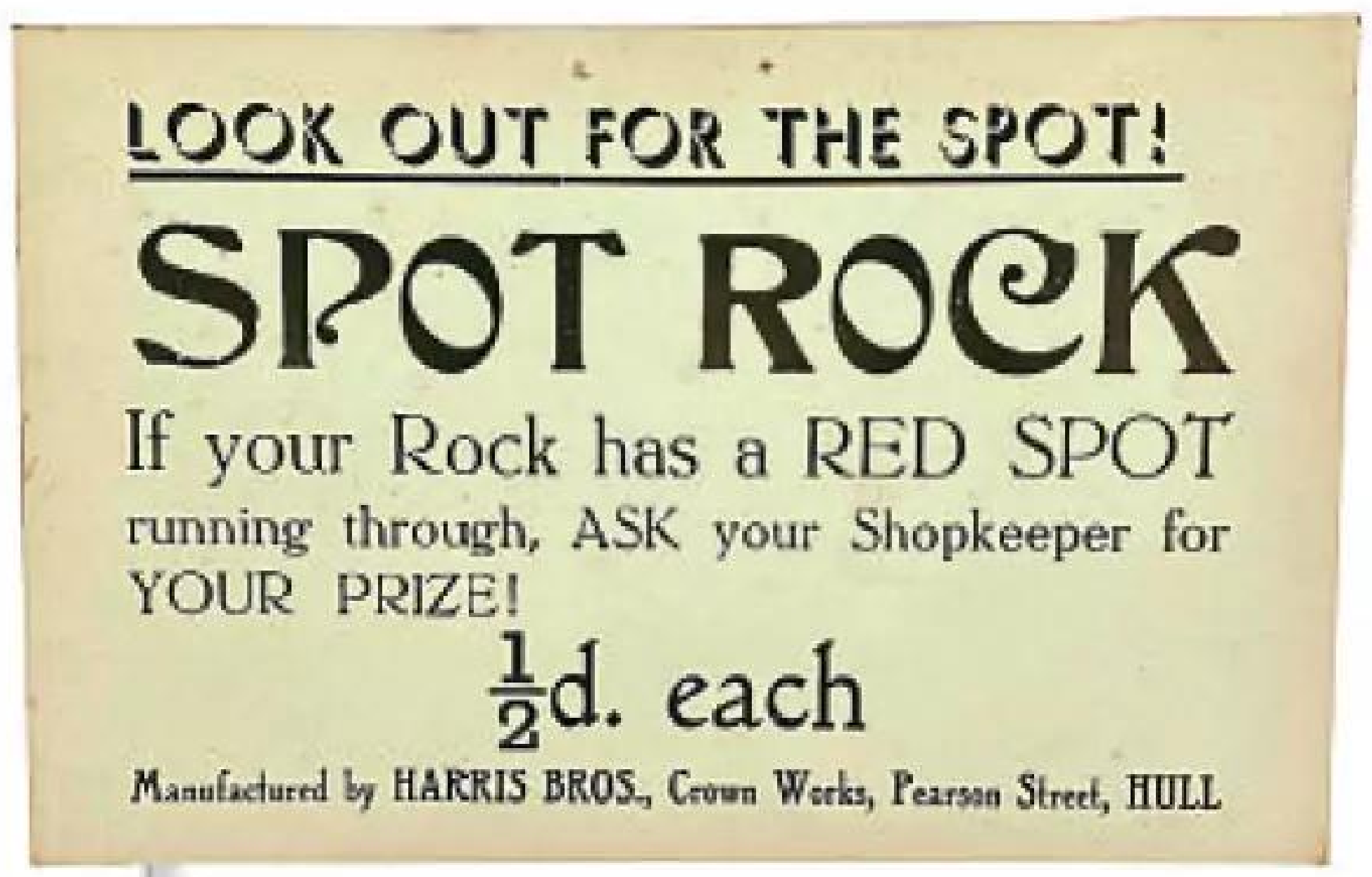
Were you ever a redskin of the great I-SPY Tribe? I-SPY spotter books were first published in 1948 by former school headmaster Charles Warrell. After being taken over by the News Chronicle newspaper, the first book published was I-SPY At the Seaside which was soon followed by On the Farm, History, and On a Train Journey. By 1953, 500,000 children had joined the I-Spy Tribe.



9 Castles in the sand

This lovely old tinplate beach bucket dates from the 1930s and was ideal for building lovely castles in the sand. It was made by Paton, Calvert & Co whose factory on Binns Road, Liverpool turned out millions of seaside sand buckets. The firm was founded by Ernest and James Whitley in 1887 but went out of business during World War Two.





LOOK OUT FOR THE SPOT!

SPOT ROCK

If your Rock has a RED SPOT running through, ASK your Shopkeeper for YOUR PRIZE!

$\frac{1}{2}$d. each

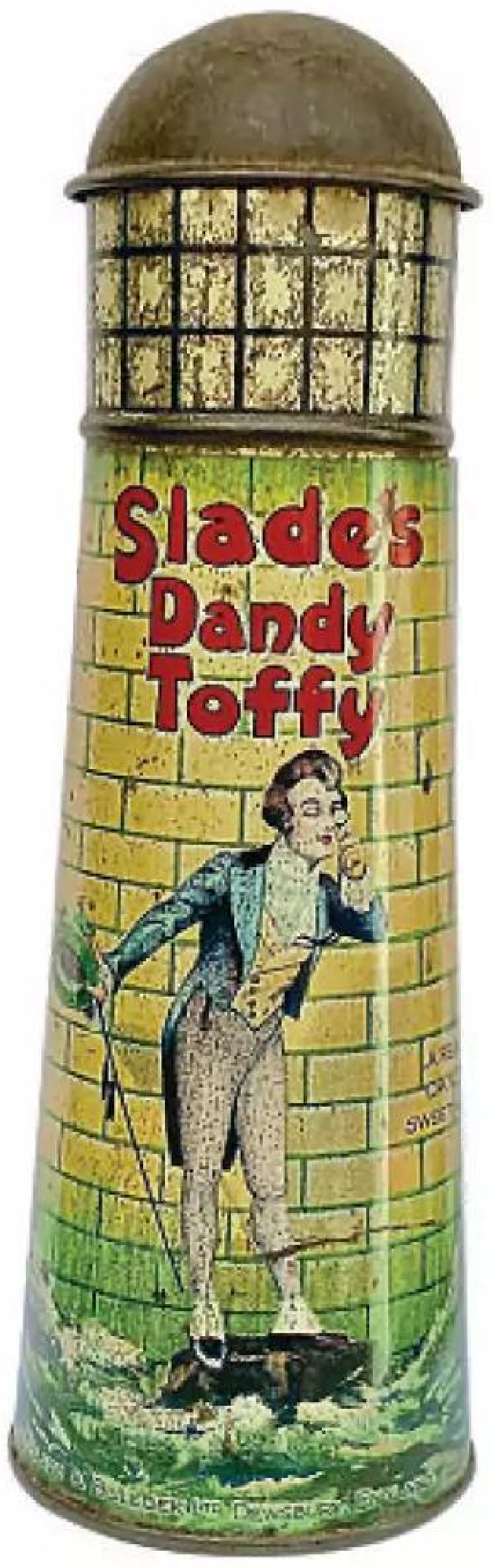
Manufactured by HARRIS BROS., Crown Works, Pearson Street, HULL

7 On the Spot

Spot Rock was made by Harris Bros at its Crown Works rock factory on Pearson Street, Hull. It supplied hundreds of seaside shops up and down the east coast with all types of rock and confectionery. Those lucky enough to find a round spot running all the way through the rock were entitled to a prize from the shop they bought it from.

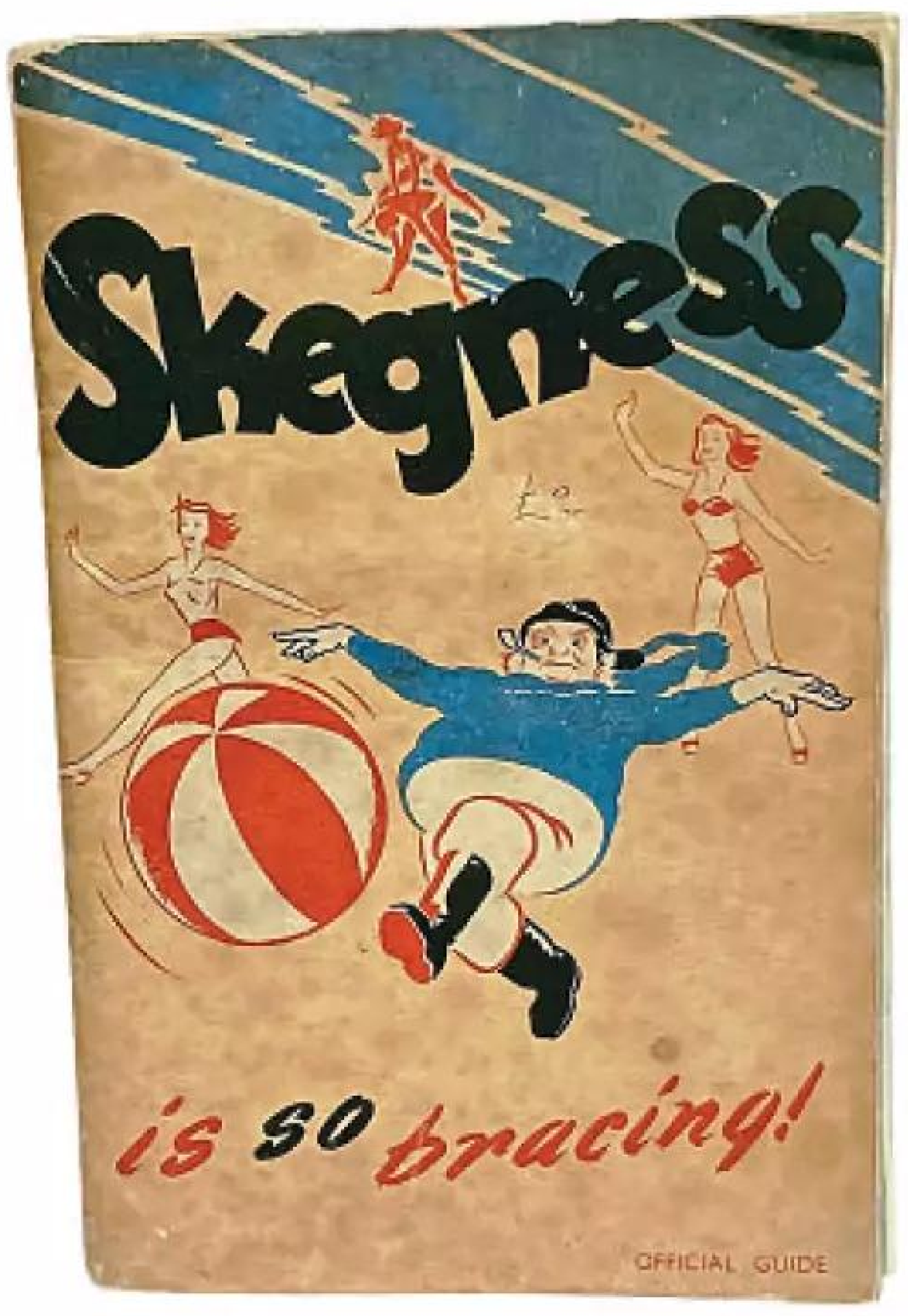
8 A Dandy sweet meat

This beautiful little tin, shaped as a lighthouse, was made by confectioners Slade & Bullock Ltd of Dewsbury, West Yorkshire. The light twists off to enable the delicate Dandy toffees to be dispensed from inside. It is more than 100 years old, dating from Edwardian days, and would have been purchased as a gift to be taken home for a loved one.



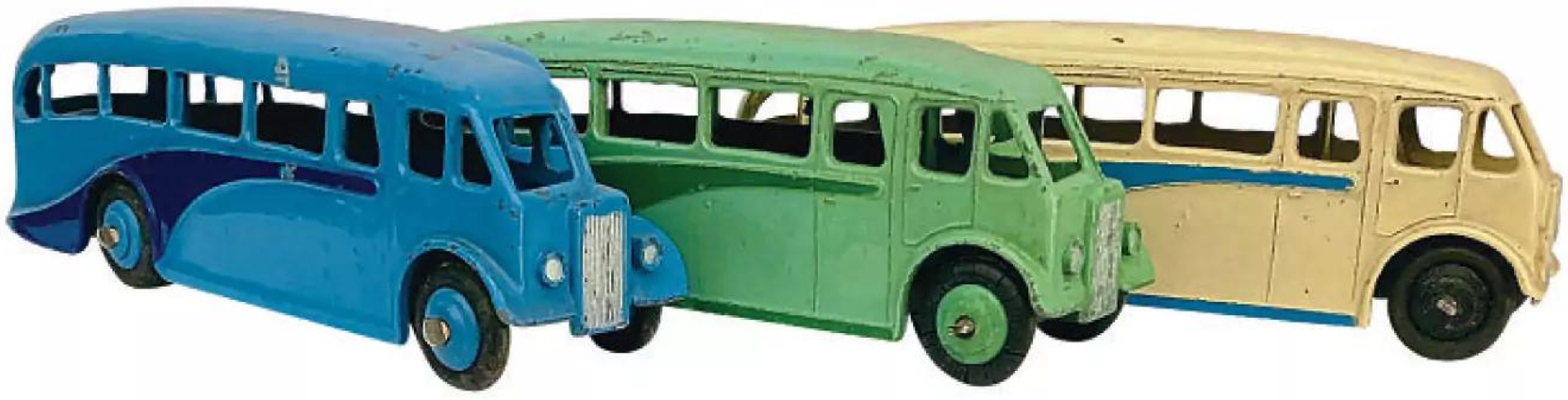
10 So Bracing

This sixpenny booklet dates from 1947 and was published by Skegness Urban District Council. The front cover shows an illustration of the iconic Jolly Fisherman who was adopted by Skegness as its mascot after he appeared on a Great Northern Railway poster in 1908. Favourite attractions listed inside include the Parade Cinema, Arcadia Theatre and Imperial Ballroom.



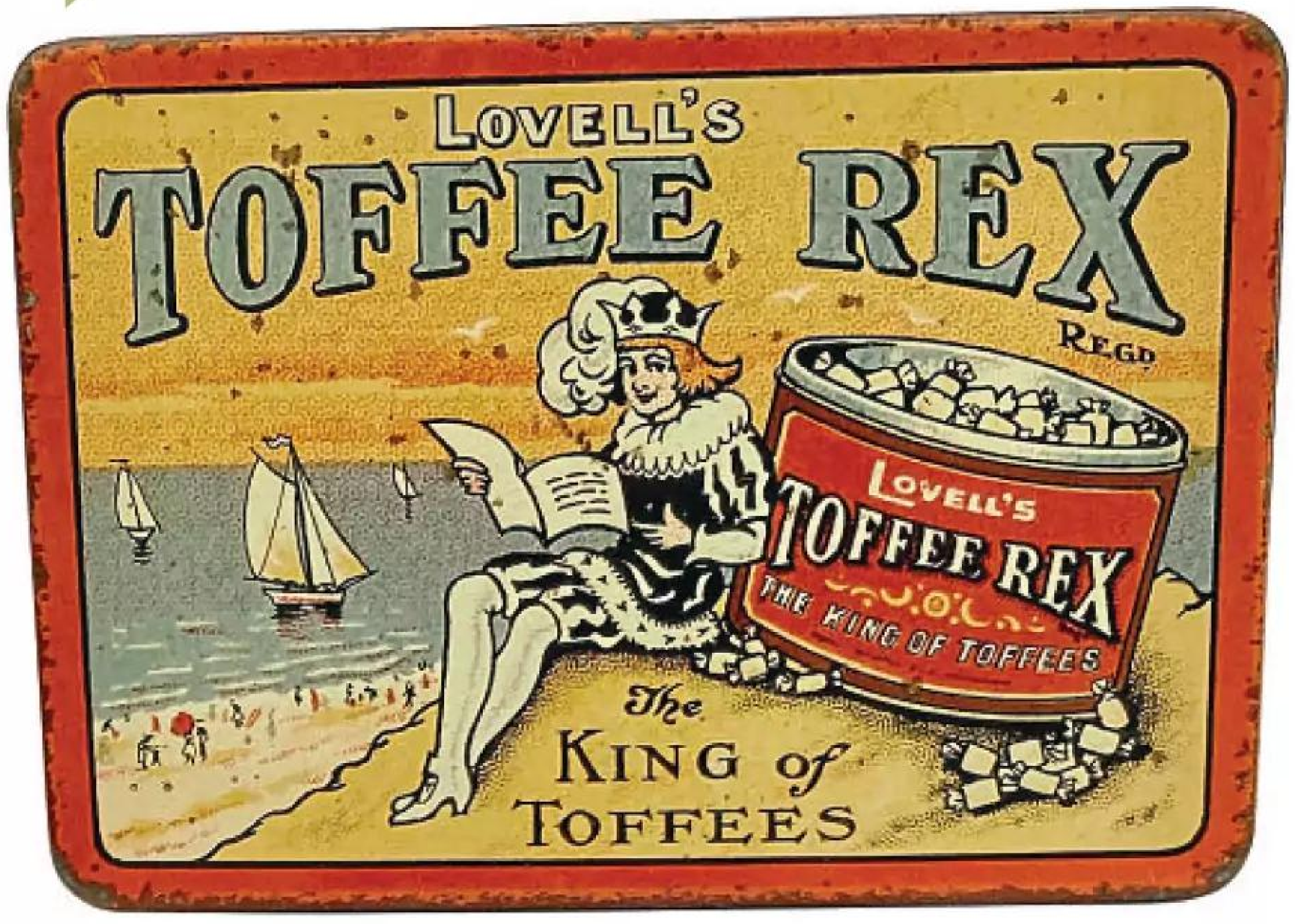
11 Day tripping

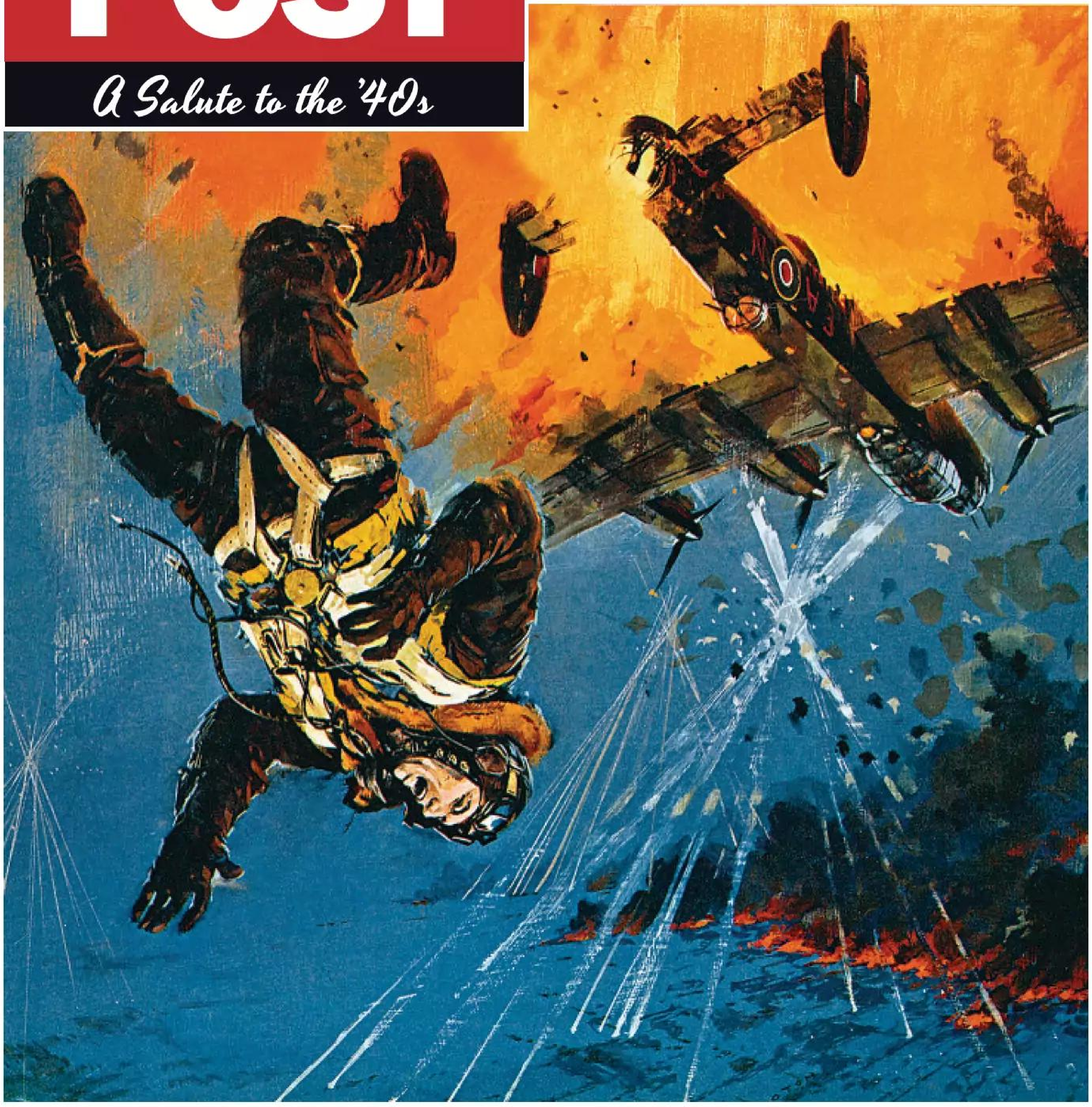
How we enjoyed those lovely day trips back in the 1950s. The half-cab motor coaches might have been a bit smoky but they got us to the seaside and back slowly but safely with a stop for fish and chips on the way home. These diecast half-cab coaches were made by Dinky Toys between 1948 and 1952.



12 King of Toffees

These small tins of toffee were sold as holiday souvenirs in all the seaside resorts along the coast of north Wales. Lovell's toffee factory was based in Newport and known as Rexville which is how the name Toffee Rex was derived. It was known as the "King of Toffees" which is why the tin shows a king sitting on the beach chewing toffee.





The Airman Who Fell from the Skies

John Greeves tells the story of the rear gunner who bailed out with no parachute – and survived

In World War Two, aerial combat involved many risks. At thousands of feet, death could come suddenly from your enemy's weaponry, causing fire, explosions or sudden disintegration of the aircraft which sent it plummeting from the sky. While parachutes could save lives, falling to earth from 18,000ft without one guaranteed only one likely outcome but exceptions to the rules always exist and even death itself can sometimes be cheated.

Nicholas Stephen Alkemade, 21, became a rear gunner shortly after the outbreak of war. Born in North Walsham, Norfolk to an English mother and a Dutch father, he worked as a market gardener in Loughborough, Leicestershire. At the start of the war, he joined air-sea rescue launches but felt it lacked real excitement, so he transferred to RAF Bomber Command and trained as a rear gunner, assigned to No 115 Squadron RAF at RAF Witchford in Cambridgeshire.

On the night of 24 March 1944, Avro Lancaster B Mk II, DS664, took off at 6.48pm as part of a raid on Berlin with a crew of seven. Flight Sergeant Nicholas Alkemade was part of a young crew, all in their early 20s, who had already completed 14 successful missions.

The outward flight was without incident and their aircraft, nicknamed "Werewolf", completed the trip to Berlin, before turning to make its long trip home.

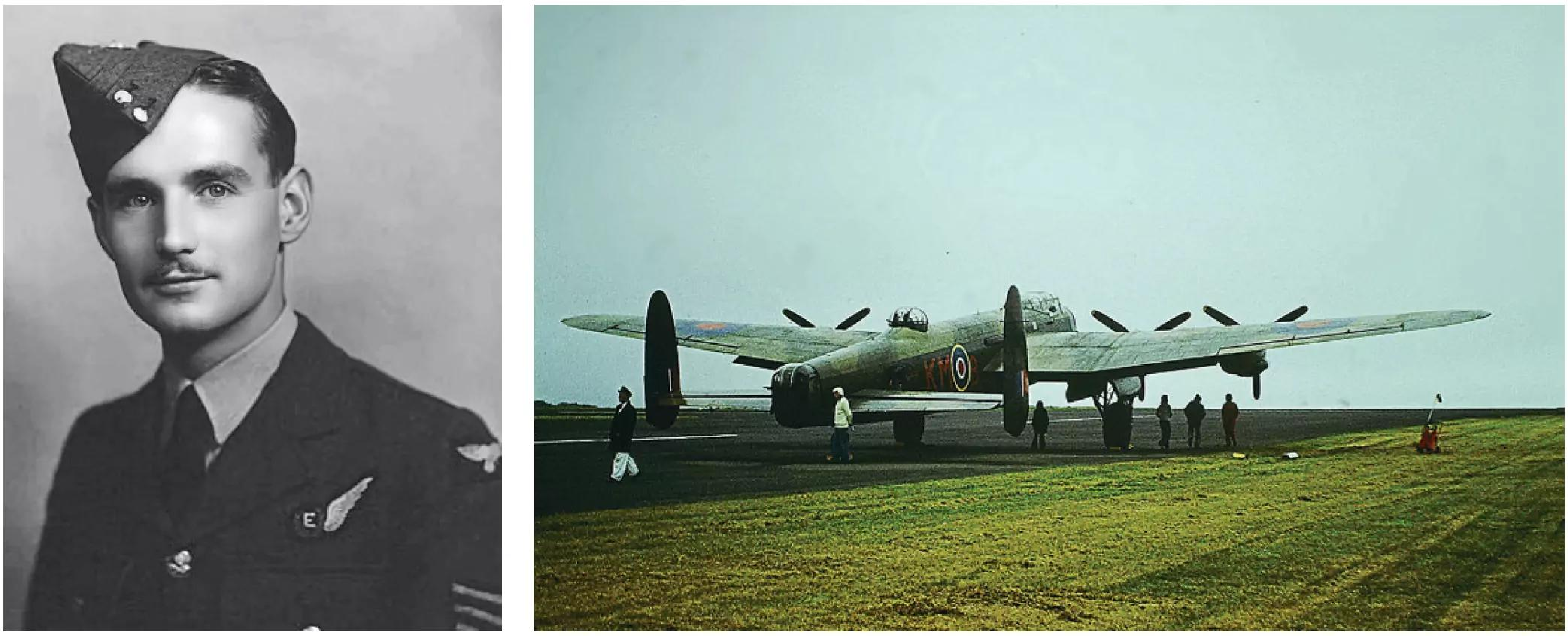
Unknown to them, a powerful northern wind pushed the bombers south over the heavily defended Ruhr. Just before midnight, a Junkers Ju 88 night-fighter, flown by Heinz Rökker, attacked their Lancaster from beneath with cannon and machine gun fire. Rökker would become an ace and by the end of the war claimed 64 aerial victories, 63 of them were nocturnal kills.

On this night, Werewolf's starboard wing and fuselage were hit and the plane burst into flames. The Perspex glazing in the rear turret was blown out, exposing Alkemade to the freezing air. The attack lasted a matter of seconds. Alkemade had managed to get a burst off with his four machine guns but to no effect. The entire length of the aircraft was now in flames and Alkemade had sustained a deep gash to his thigh as the Lancaster began to waver out of control. Pilot Flight Sergeant James Newman ordered the crew to bail out.

This was a problem for Alkemade, as the rear gun turret was too small to stow a parachute that was kept in a canister in the rear fuselage. He acted quickly, aligning the turret and then opening the turret doors, only to be met by an inferno. His parachute was on fire and he faced a terrible choice as he later recalled: "I had the choice of staying with the aircraft or jumping out. If I stayed, I would be burned to death – my clothes were already well alight and my face and hands burnt, though at the time I scarcely noticed the pain owing to my high state of excitement.

"I decided to jump and end it all as quick and clean as I could. I rotated the turret to starboard, and, not even bothering to take off my helmet and intercom, did a back flip out into the night. It was very quiet, the only sound being the drumming of aircraft engines in the distance, and no sensation of falling at all. I felt suspended in space. Regrets at not getting home were my chief thoughts, and I did think once that it didn't seem very strange to be going to die in a few seconds – none of the parade of my past or anything else like that."

He fell looking up at the night sky, descending at a speed of 120mph until he lost consciousness. Amazingly, he woke up three hours later, lying in deep snow



Left: Flight Sergeant Nicholas Alkemade originally joined air-sea rescue launches but felt it lacked real excitement, so he transferred to Bomber Command and trained as a rear gunner. Right: An Avro Lancaster B Mk II at an air display at Swansea Airport, the same make and model of aircraft from which Flight Sergeant Nicholas Alkemade jumped on the night of 24 March 1944.

beneath a small pine forest. The pine tree branches had slowed his descent and there was just enough snow to cushion his fall.

The fact he was unconscious and relaxed probably helped, too, in saving his life. He had suffered no broken bones, just bruising, some burn wounds, a twisted knee and he still had some Perspex fragments and wood splinters embedded in his skin.

Alkemade lit a cigarette and looked around the terrain. He noticed the snow only lay under the pine trees; just a few metres away in any direction it had melted. Had he landed anywhere else, he would have surely died. It was bitterly cold and Alkemade found he was unable to walk, so he blew his distress whistle and was eventually found and carried off by civilians to a local infirmary before being moved to a larger hospital. Here, his burns were treated and the Perspex and wood splinters removed.

Next day, the Gestapo interrogated him, thinking he was a spy and wanting to know what had happened to his parachute. Alkemade insisted he had jumped without a parachute, but they refused to believe him. He then told them where to find his discarded harness as this would prove he was telling the truth; the lift webs would still be stowed in position and not unclipped or extended when a parachute was deployed.

A search confirmed Alkemade's story; the metal ripcord of his handle and cable, all that remained of his parachute, was found in the stowage canister of the plane wreckage. The aircraft had crashed 20 miles away, killing the pilot Jack Newman and three others. The Germans not only believed him but gave him a signed certificate attesting to his incredible survival.

After a three-week stay in hospital, Alkemade was photographed for the German press before being sent to Stalag Luft III, one of World War Two's most notorious prisoner of war camps.

Stalag Luft III at the time was in the German province of Lower Silesia, near the town of Sagan (now Żagań in Poland) in which the Germans housed captured allied airmen. It is remembered for one of the most audacious prison breaks which Hollywood turned into The Great Escape (1963). On the night Alkemade hurtled to earth on 24 March 1944, 76 men had tunnelled their way to freedom. Alkemade's first encounter of the PoW camp was to be put into a room where, a week earlier, the great escapers had tunnelled their way out. Unfortunately for him, the tunnel had been filled in.

When Alkemade arrived, the encampment consisted of 15 single-storey huts but this increased greatly, so by the end of the war, the camp housed 2,500 Royal Air Force officers and 7,500 United States Army Air Forces personnel plus 900 officers from other allied air forces. Alkemade became something of a celebrity and met several Luftwaffe officers who wanted to hear about his death-defying jump. In camp, his story earned him extra cigarettes in exchange for inscribing prisoners' wartime logs.

Compared to other camps, Stalag Luft III was much better than some. It boasted a range of amenities including a fully equipped theatre, several orchestras, a library and had educational programmes, sports teams, and religious services. Of the many activities, reading was perhaps the most popular. Despite all this, Alkemade's own log tells of the monotonous boredom endured by him and his fellow PoWs.

The Reich diet only accounted for around 1,600 calories per day, which was hardly enough to keep a small child active. The Red Cross parcels provided a lifeline, without which many of the men would have struggled to survive their time in the camp, let alone the hardships that would follow during "The Long March" in 1945. Germany was losing the war, and the Soviet army was advancing. New orders arrived (not unexpectedly) and 10,000 inmates of Stalag Luft III were forced to trek hundreds of miles across northern Germany through blizzards where temperatures dropped to -22C at night.

Not everyone made it but Alkemade survived and was eventually returned to civilian life. He married his sweetheart, Pearl Belton, and they had two children, a son, Nicholas (who preferred to be called Nick), and a daughter, Valerie. Alkemade found work in a chemical plant and, unbelievably, avoided death when he received an electric shock which dislodged his mask and exposed him to chlorine gas for 15 minutes before he was rescued. Later, he became a furniture salesman for Clemerson Ltd in Loughborough. He died aged 64 on 22 June 1987 in Liskeard, Cornwall.

Perhaps the greatest honour afforded him was by his former squadron, 115 Squadron, in renaming a building at its present home, RAF Wittering, as the Alkemade Building in honour of his achievements and a reminder of those who had served so valiantly and selflessly.

Images: (Main) © Look and Learn, (Lancaster) Creative Commons/Hugh Llewelyn

Round the AUCTION HOUSES

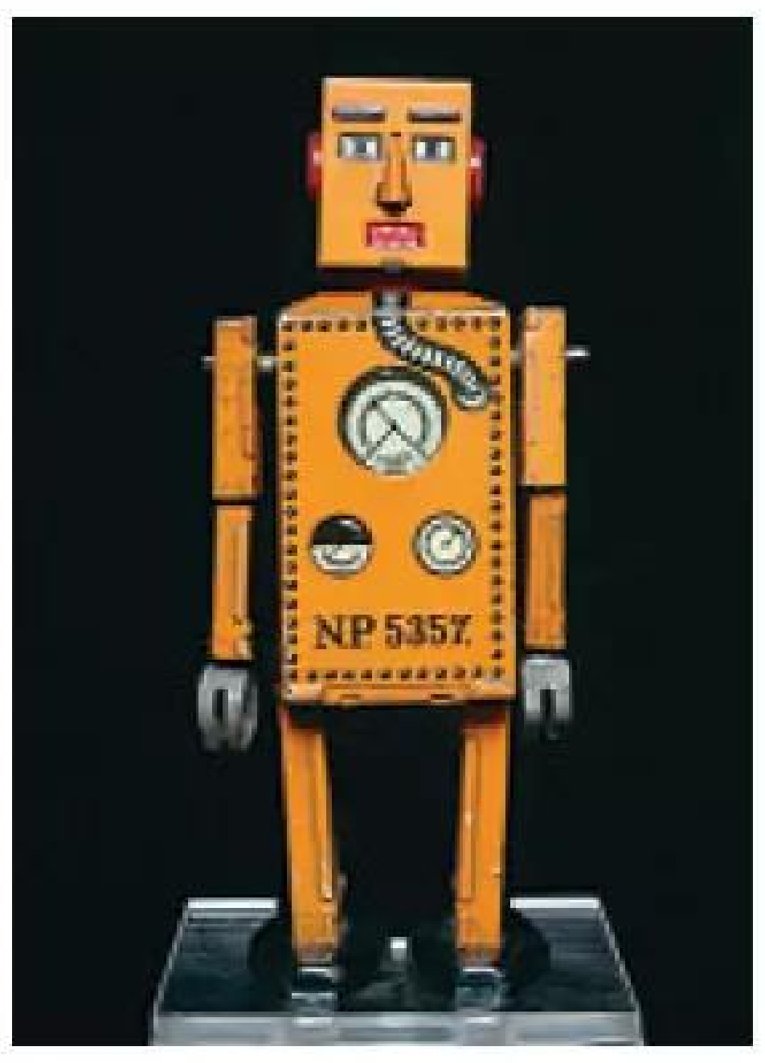
Every week at auction houses up and down the country, a varied host of collectables are put up for sale at general and specialist events, offering everything from top-end treasures to more modest items. **David Brown** picks a selection of recent gems that have found new homes, and looks ahead to forthcoming sales.

Elmdon Model Engineering Society – Sealed Bid Auction, closed 28 March (wythallsteamrail.com)

A beautiful 7.25ins gauge model of Great Western Railway 4-6-0 No 6011 King James I has been sold in a sealed bid auction raising a substantial sum for Alzheimer's Research. The locomotive was built by former BR Western Region engineman Dennis Herbert, who fired the original "Kings" on London Paddington to Wolverhampton main line trains. Dennis, who has received a terminal cancer diagnosis, decided to put the locomotive up for sale to help Alzheimer's Research in honour of his wife and colleagues who succumbed to the disease. The Elmdon Model Engineering Society (EMES) were pleased to announce that an anonymous member had secured the locomotive so that it can continue to operate at the Wythall Miniature Railway, where it is based. Photo courtesy of EMES.

SOLD FOR £40,000

LOT 467 Hartleys – Toys & Collectors Auction, 5 April (hartleysauctions.co.uk)



A rare KT Toys of Japan clockwork robot "Liliput" provided one of the highlights of the April collectors sale presented by Hartleys of Ilkley. Described as "the best example we have seen", the robot has had one family owner from new and was in very good condition for a toy that is almost 100 years old. Finished in orange with printed detail, it had been tested and found to be in working order. There were signs of age to the paint/print work, with a few minor chips to the paintwork. This sale also included a good variety of working steam models plus numerous model vehicles connected with the James Bond film franchise.

SOLD FOR £3,800

LOT 3420 Cheffins – Vintage Sale, 25-26 April (cheffins.co.uk)

CROWN STEAM HAULAGE Co

The April Vintage sale held by Cheffins (in the company's 200th anniversary year) was its biggest yet with more than 500 lots, grossing more than £3.2m in total. The top lot was a 1928 Foden D Type timber tractor steam waggon, that exceeded its £230,000-250,000 estimate. This was followed by another 1928 vintage vehicle, a Sentinel Super steam wagon, which sold to a Hampshire collector for £123,280. There were 400+ tractors on offer with the top price going to an immaculately restored 1982 County 774, sold for £83,544. There were also several collectable cars and motorcycles going beneath the hammer. Not all of them were that old – a 2016 Subaru WRX Sti with just 124 miles on the clock made £48,240. The next Vintage Sale from Cheffins will be held on 18-19 July.

SOLD FOR £305,520

LOT 25 Lacy Scott & Knight – Toys & Models Sale, 2 May (lskauctioncentre.co.uk)

A fine selection of tether cars got the latest LSK Toys & Models Sale (featuring 1,900 lots) off to a great start. An exceptional example was a rare, limited edition of 2,000 pieces of an Ambrosi Gattafonie Maserati modelled on the 1957/58 250F. The car had a cast aluminium pan and body with cast in details such as the louvres. Fitted with a working SuperTigre-based motor with centrifugal clutch and bevel drive gearbox, the 43cm model was offered in a presentation wooden case complete with the edition date and builder's name.

SOLD FOR £1,400

COMING UP

LOT TBA Charterhouse – Classic & Vintage Car Auction, 26 June (charterhouse-auction.com)

An Armstrong Siddeley Hurricane drophead coupe bought new in July 1946 by land and water speed record holder Sir Malcolm Campbell, is included in June's sale at the Haynes Motor Museum at Sparkford, Somerset. Restored and painted in Campbell's famous Bluebird colour scheme (which he originally specified at the factory), he used the vehicle as his regular road car and it was probably the last such vehicle he owned as he died on New Year's Eve 1948. The car has had a number of owners since then and decayed in a damp garage before it was rescued and has subsequently received a thorough restoration by a couple of owners, back to its former glory. The car was sold for as little as £20 in the past, but Charterhouse's current estimate is £10,000-15,000.

When you are placing your bid(s) please be sure about what you are bidding for. Remember to take into account that on top of the hammer price, you will have to pay a buyer's premium (usually with VAT payable on the premium). Also, allow for post and packing with remote bidding.

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Yesterday Remembered

We welcome your memories of around 800 words and pay £20 for each story published. Don't forget to include pictures with your submission.

Driven to Distraction

Marion Ross of Ontario, Canada remembers:

When my father got his first car, driving tests were suspended due to the Suez Crisis, and learners were allowed to drive unaccompanied. We, being Nanna, Mother and I, eagerly went out in the car with him for the Sunday afternoon drive that people enjoyed then. Maybe to local bluebell or primrose woods where we could pick them indiscriminately. Later in life, my father told me how scared he was, driving us all, as a learner.

The arrival of a car in our lives meant we could drive from Kent to Scotland. At that time there was no motorway, so we usually made it to the Carlisle area the first night. My parents had met at a dance during the war when he was in the army and stationed near Dumbarton, West Dunbartonshire. My mother, being Scottish, and my father, being English, married in 1946 after he returned from India. Some time before I was born in 1949, Nanna (my maternal grandmother) came to live with us permanently. She had been widowed for the second time in 1948.

For several years, we went to Scotland to visit family and friends. We went on alternate years. The other years we did day trips in Kent to save money for the trips to Scotland. I remember the friends of the family were called "Aunty" or "Uncle", so I did not know who our blood relatives were. We would travel around various towns in Scotland visiting the families.

I also remember seeing people in the old tenement buildings, where there was a communal toilet inside for several residents to share. An unusual feature was beds in the living rooms that pulled down from the wall. In fact, I later learned my mother had slept in one until her marriage, aged 24, having no bedroom to herself.

Whenever we travelled, we stayed in B&Bs. It never crossed my parents' minds to go to a hotel – it was not "for the likes of us". B&Bs gave us modest accommodation with a lovely full breakfast included at an affordable price.

Left: Marion giving her father – who never took a driving test – some bluebells she had picked. Right: Marion picking primroses on a Sunday afternoon drive to a local wood.

I remember being in a town unfamiliar to my parents. Friends and family had moved away from Dumbarton, where my mother and grandmother had grown up, so we were visiting in a new area. My mother always said you asked a policeman where you could find a clean B&B.

So, when a policeman was spotted, we pulled up and she asked him. He said he knew of one, spoke to a child nearby, and said she would direct us there.

The girl, maybe aged eight, climbed in and sat on my mother's lap and directed us to a flat. The woman there accepted us (price having been agreed upon) and we went out to eat while she cleaned out her own and her child's bedroom for us. For whatever reason, the policeman knew she needed money. I assume she stayed overnight with friends or relatives. In the morning, she was there to give us a lovely breakfast. Of course, today no one would put a child in a car with complete strangers and let them drive off.

I remember visiting my mother's cousin and being sent out to play with her two boys. They and their friends were playing in puddles around a building site, unhappy to be encumbered with an English girl who they couldn't understand. I couldn't understand what they were saying.

I really enjoyed the trips to Scotland, as we saw different parts of the country and I have lasting memories of them. Nanna died when I was 14 and after that my parents preferred European holidays, so that was the last time I visited Scotland. My DNA shows me to be primarily Scottish, so my connection there is strong. I think life is mostly about making memories and then recollecting them. I am fortunate to have plenty to look back on.

Little Sunbeams

Merton Miles of Farsley, Leeds, West Yorkshire writes:

Who owned the theatres back in the old days? Today, apart from the London theatres, most of the regional ones are owned and run by councils which subsidise and run them for the benefit of the public. Back in the old days, however, most of them were owned and run by private entrepreneurs who developed large businesses from this, particularly before the days of television.

One such theatrical impresario in the north of England was a man named Francis Laidler. He owned several theatres in West Yorkshire including the Alhambra, Bradford; the Prince's Theatre, Bradford; the Theatre Royal, Leeds, and the Hippodrome in Keighley. He specialised mostly in musical theatre including musical variety revues, opera, ballet, and, of course, pantomimes. On top of this, he also produced pantomimes at many other theatres across the UK including in London's West End and at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. He would personally cast, produce, and rehearse each one, and in total he produced 250 pantomimes.

Among his usual lineup for such productions, he had a speciality all his own. Apart from the usual troupe of dancers, he had another group of 12 juvenile tap dancers. He called each of these troupes the Sunbeams and they first performed at the Prince's Theatre in 1913. In the early days, they performed in a revue which toured the country, and then he went on to create two troupes for his pantomimes only where they were featured as a separate performance.

They performed every evening (except Sundays) and matinees, and they always had to finish by 9pm so they couldn't take part in the finale of the second evening show. Because they couldn't attend school, they were provided with tuition at the theatre. As a trademark act in all his shows, these girls had to be very special.

Above: Merton's wife, June (left), pictured when she was 12 with her younger sister, Eunice, in 1938. June was a Sunbeam and Eunice had her hair cut and styled in the same way as her sister.

Apart from being top-class dancers, they all had to have their special Sunbeam look. They needed to be the same height, the same shape, the same colour hair (brunette – no blonde or ginger-haired girls were allowed) and, above all, they all had to have the Sunbeam hair style. This was short and straight with a fringe that came over their foreheads.

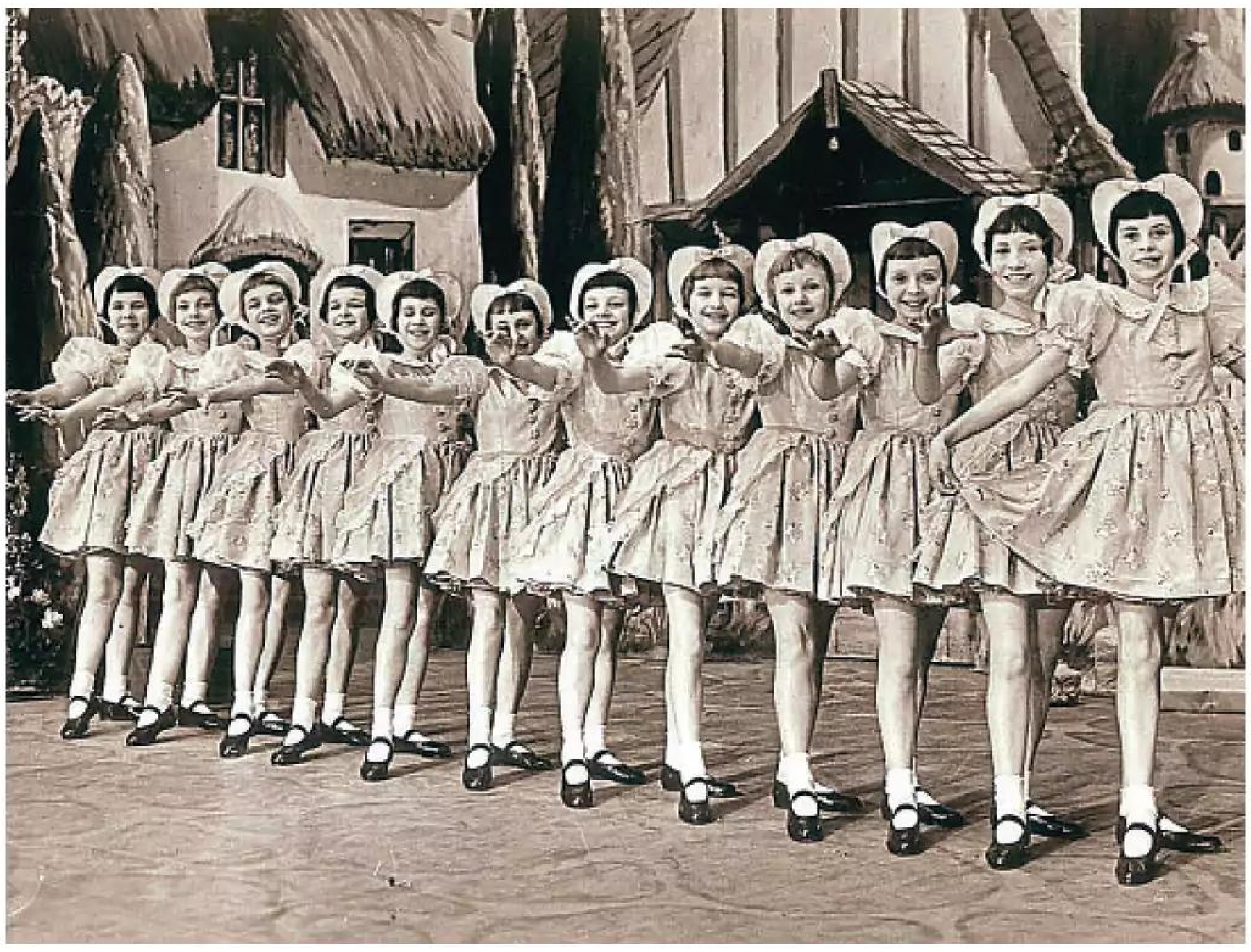
Francis Laidler took good care of his girls and always made them feel happy at their work. In fact, he treated them all as if they were his family. My wife, June, became a Sunbeam when she was 12 and spent two delightful years working for "Daddy Laidler" at the Alhambra Theatre, Bradford and the Theatre Royal, Leeds. The girls all looked upon him as a father-figure who would take care of them, and they were encouraged to call him "Daddy" or "Papa" Laidler. Through my wife, I have met other women who were Sunbeams when they were young and have been amazed to find that they all referred to him with such great affection as if he had been their real father.

The Alhambra Theatre in Bradford was purpose-built by Francis Laidler in 1913 and opened its doors to the public in March 1914. It was never closed throughout the war years and so the Sunbeams were there during both wars to play their part in keeping the people's spirits up, "to bring sunshine in the dark days of war."

Alas, this happy period in their lives had to be short-lived. The regime of them all having to look the same was very strict, and as soon as they grew too tall to match the others they had to go. Amid a flood of tears and sad farewells, their Sunbeams days were over, and June had to leave when she was 14 for that reason.

You can imagine how upsetting this was for them. After being taken into the excitement of a showbusiness life at such a young age, performing nightly in front of huge live audiences doing something that they loved, it must have been a harsh reality for them when it all abruptly ended.

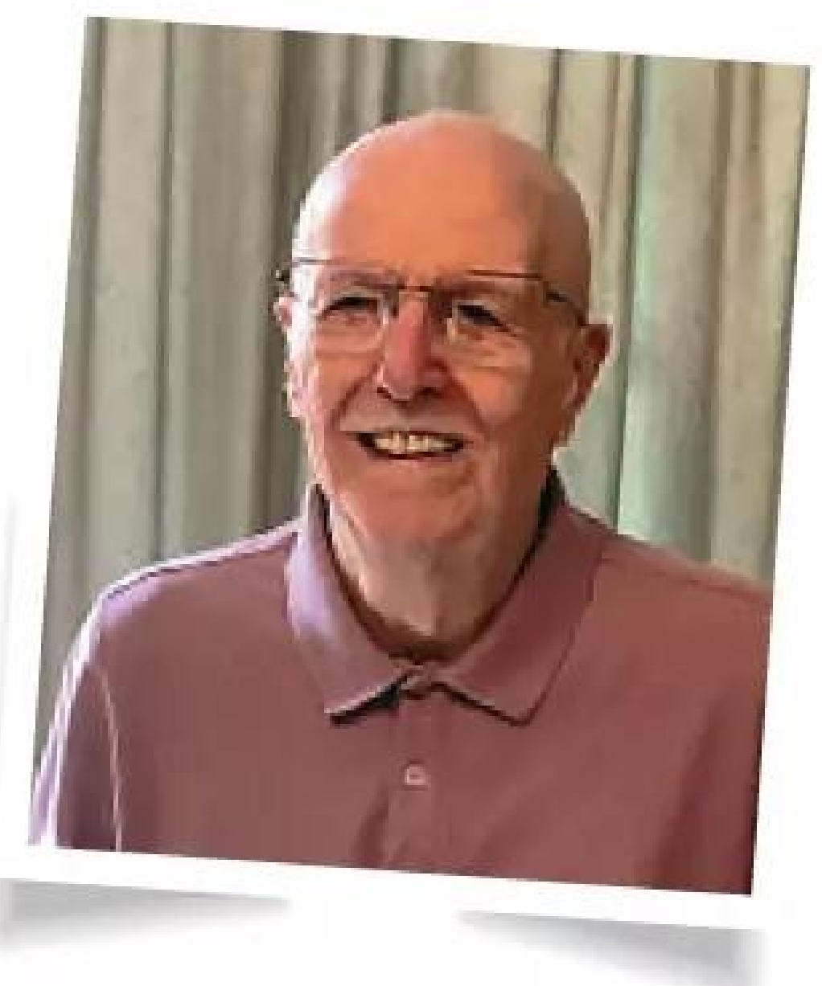
However, whatever they did next, they would always have their treasured memories of that period in their lives when they were young – when they were stars and when they were "Sunbeams".



Left: Francis Laidler was a father-figure to his Sunbeams who were encouraged to call him "Daddy" or "Papa". Right: Apart from being top-class dancers, all 12 Sunbeams needed to be the same height, the same shape, the same colour hair and, had to have the same hair style.

The Great Dane

Peter Goodacre of Waterlooville Hampshire remembers:



I do not know what reactions I felt on reading the article in February's issue headlined The Gongman and written by John Phillpott. On reading the name Carl Dane, it was a surprise that after so many years the name has crossed my path again. A name that has been in my memory for so long. I am now 94 and my contact with Carl was as a boy of eight.

My story begins prewar. We had already had a panic in 1938 at the time of the Munich crisis and prime minister Neville Chamberlain had gone to Germany to meet Hitler and come back with the well-known white paper and "peace in our time".

When the war began in 1939, we still lived in London. My father was a senior NCO in the Royal Horse Guards (now the Blues and Royals) and, with the Life Guards, formed the Household Cavalry. The trouble was, the Life Guards and the Blues interchanged every year with London and Windsor barracks and, as we lived in married quarters, it meant we had to move as well.

As it was wartime, we had to leave the barracks and I was sent to live with my grandparents in Lincolnshire, in a village called Billingborough, near Sleaford. My grandfather was the local jeweller and watchmaker. Also living with my grandparents was my Uncle Reg, who had been a professional footballer, playing for West Ham United.

> "I am sure the residents were a bit wary of Carl, as his size was most impressive."

Carl Dane was living in the village and he and Uncle Reg were great pals. How and why Carl came to settle in the village is unknown, although I am sure the residents were a bit wary of him, as his size was most impressive. However, he seemed to get on well with them. He used to drive a German-made Mercedes car, like the one Hitler rode in. That is, I believe, the reason us children thought Carl was a German spy.

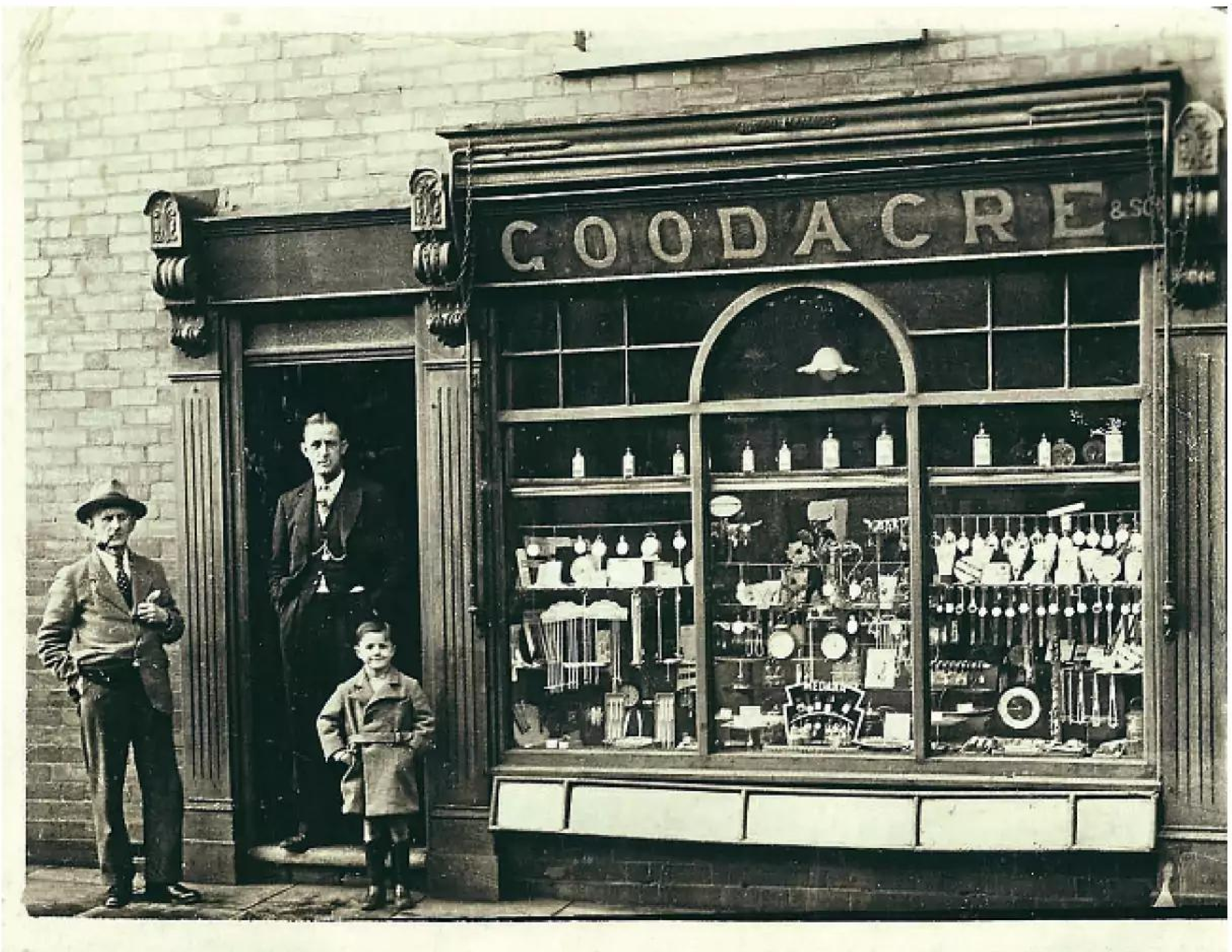
On one of our war weeks to gather money for the war effort, Carl pulled a single-decker bus along the high street with his teeth, much to the delight of the crowd. I wouldn't be surprised if he performed the same feat to raise money for other good causes as well, knowing his generous nature. He liked the limelight.

As a watchmaker, a profession he learned from his father, Uncle Reg was in a reserved occupation. He didn't have to join the forces but he was liable for war work, so he became an inspector at a war factory in Grantham. He was seriously injured when the Germans bombed the factory but he recovered after many months.

He was then employed by the Kesteven War Agriculture Committee to oversee the distribution of German prisoners of war to work in the many farms in the area. There was a large PoW camp outside the village. There was also a hostel for Land Army girls on the other side. The village was the focal point for the Saturday night crowd that came from the surrounding fenlands for an evening in the pubs. No doubt Carl and Reg would be the life and soul of the party.

Things were pretty basic in those days. Most wagons were horse-drawn and the village even had a horse-drawn fire engine, although if a fire occurred it seemed easier for the many volunteers who rushed to man it to push it than try to collect the horse from the field.

It is so nice to realise that Carl has been remembered after such a long time and I can recall those happy days as a boy during the war when I had known him. Well done, Best of British.



Left: Former circus strongman – and Rank Film's original "Gongman" – Carl Dane was a good friend of Peter's Uncle Reg, a former professional footballer. Right: Peter with his grandfather and Uncle Reg in front of the family jewellery shop.

Still Beating a Rhythm

Shane Hinson of Towcester, Northamptonshire remembers:

Growing up in our house in Buckingham during the 1960s, there was always music to be heard, whether from a radio, record player or television. My dad loved his Herb Alpert records and my mum loved the pop tunes of the day: the Beatles, the Dave Clark Five, the Rolling Stones to name but a few. Although we watched our favourite artists on a black and white television on shows such as Ready Steady Go!, Juke Box Jury, and even Pinky and Perky, nobody in the family felt the urge to pick up and learn an instrument.

This all changed for me at secondary school in autumn 1973. On a rainy day at break time, a couple of pals, Trevor and Ian, and I were discussing the groups of the day, perhaps after a particularly good episode of Top of the Pops.

Trevor, who could play the guitar, suggested we should form a group. We all loved the idea, and I said I would play the drums, Ian the guitar, and I nominated my younger brother, Stuart, to play bass guitar.

Of course, it was all very well saying we would form a group but, apart from Trevor, we had no idea if we would be able to play our chosen instruments, nor had we the equipment. After speaking to our respective parents, we were equally surprised and delighted when they agreed to buy our instruments.

Ian got his Top Twenty guitar from Woolworths in the town, as did my brother who got a bass guitar which was almost bigger than him. However, I had to go further afield. After a bit of research from my dad, off we went to a music shop in Northampton to purchase my drum kit. I remember seeing it stacked up in a corner, a shiny, silver sparkle Pearl drum kit. After my dad negotiated a couple of secondhand cymbals off, we went to set them up at home.

We were lucky to live in an old Victorian house which had two sitting rooms. One room was allocated to us children as a playroom. It had an old sofa and a large desk where I often sat to make my Airfix and Frog models. On the walls were posters of David Bowie, T Rex, Slade, and Sweet and it was in here that my drums were set up.

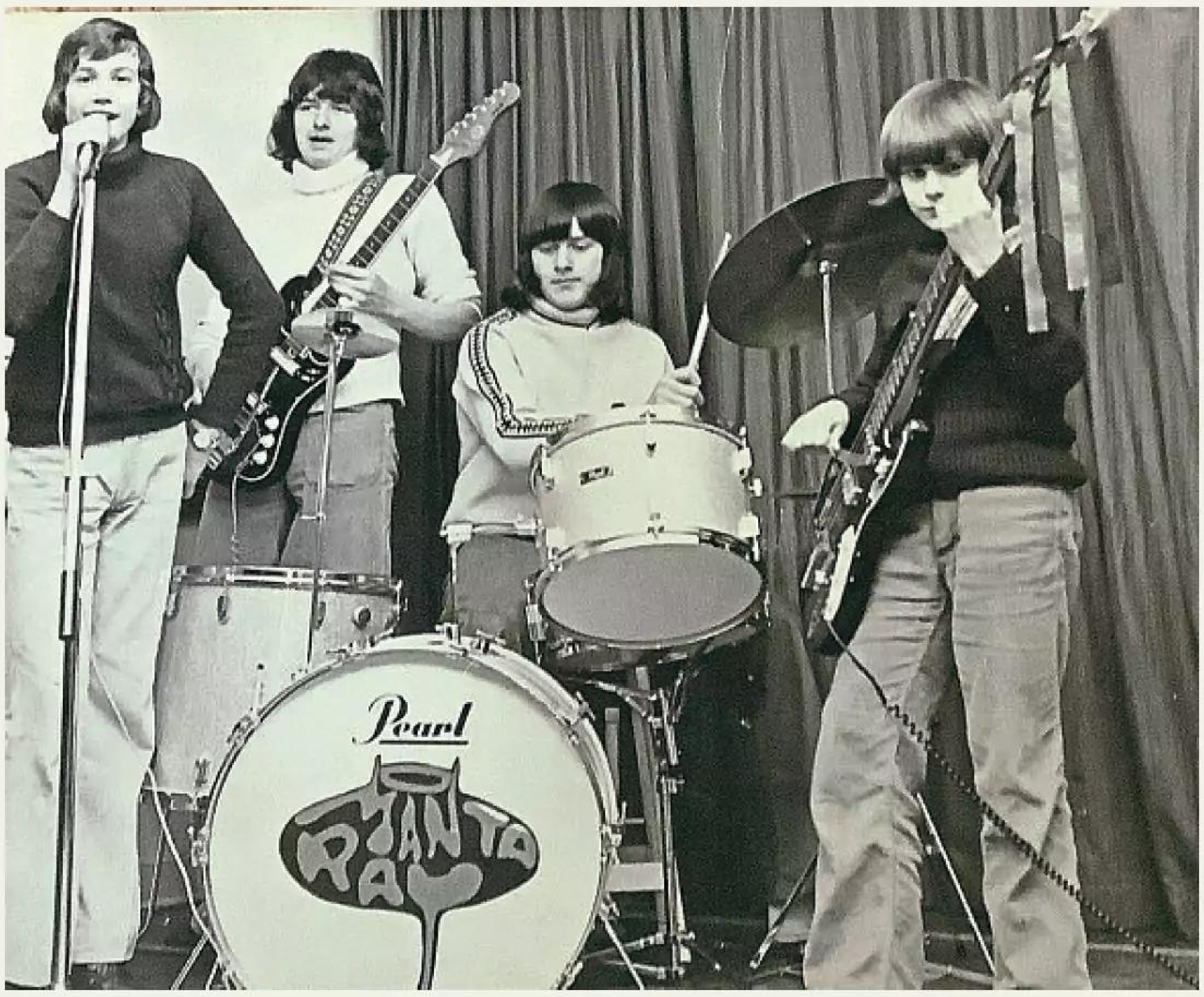
While we were learning to play, we must have sounded awful as we were all self-taught. We learned by watching the groups on TV and by continually lifting the stylus from a record of the tune we were trying to play. A good proportion of tunes we learned were by Status Quo as Trevor was a huge fan. Gradually, after testing both my parents and the neighbours, we improved our competence and repertoire.

We had called ourselves Manta Ray and I designed the logo to go on the front of my bass drum. Glam rock was all the rage, and we thought we would try it out. I raided my mum's makeup box. However, the result wasn't good, and we looked more like bad panto dames.

On turning 16, we had got ourselves some mopeds and joined a local youth club. This proved to be the venue for our first gig. After borrowing a bigger amplifier from one of Trevor's friends, we were let loose on the public and gave it our all to a packed room. We were delighted to be asked back to play which we did on a few occasions. We all loved the attention that we were getting, especially from the girls.

Our highlight came when we found out we were to play at Buckingham Carnival in the summer of 1974. It was held in a field named Cornwall's Meadow where the car park for Waitrose now stands. A farm trailer was our stage and, after setting up with our limited equipment, it did look quite bare. At our allocated time, we took to the stage and felt very alone up there looking out at the hordes of people. We hadn't played outside before, no sound check was done and the levels must have been all over the place. I cringe to think how we must have sounded but at least our parents were happy.

On leaving school, the band broke up and only Trevor and I carried on playing. Over the years, I've played in many bands, only stopping when my children were young. I resumed a few years back and, as I approach my 70th year, I have no intention of stopping.



BOOK NOW for Father's Day

Left: Manta Ray – whose logo was designed by Shane – in January 1974, with Shane on drums, guitarists Trevor and Ian, and Shane's younger brother, Stuart, on bass. Right: Shane with his drum kit, ready to perform at a recent gig.

We've Only Just Begun

Sharon Haston of Falkirk, Stirlingshire remembers:

In my head, when someone talks about the year 1990, I think it was about 20 years ago. Then I remember I got married in 1990 and soon it'll be our 35th wedding anniversary. Where has the time gone? To take you back, in 1990, we went to see Ghost, Home Alone and Pretty Woman at the cinema. All are still classics. When we married in May, Robert's mum begged us to change it due to the saying "marry in May, regret the day" but we'd already booked the venue.

The No 1 single was Killer by Adamski. Thankfully, the song on our wedding video was the much more romantic We've Only Just Begun by the Carpenters. After our traditional church wedding and honeymoon in Lake Bled, in what was then Yugoslavia, now Slovenia, we settled into married life.

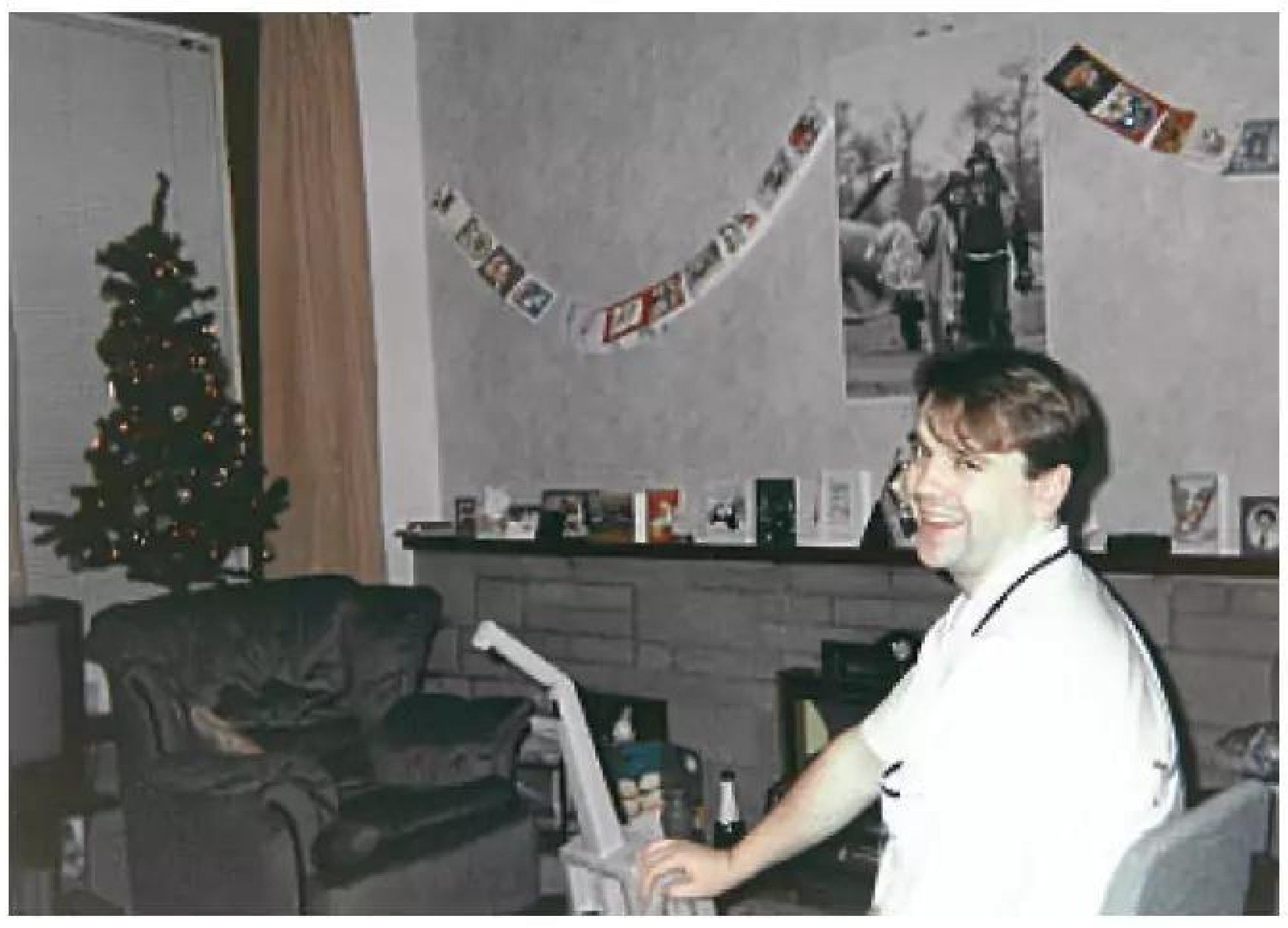
Our first home was a tiny flat with only one bedroom. Our front (and only) door opened out into the shared garden which was just an enormous drying green with clothes poles dotted around it.

At that time, I used a rope washing line. I'm not tall so had to jump up to reach the spars to wind the rope round. Unfortunately, one time I caught my wedding ring and it ended up misshapen. I was relieved my finger remained attached to my hand.

The two-storey block we stayed in had been built in 1901. We had an outside storage area which had once held the outside toilet. Our solicitor had paperwork showing plans for the toilet being brought indoors. It happened sometime in the 1970s, so a mere 15 to 20 years before we bought the flat. I would have hated having to go outside in the middle of a cold dark night. At the top end of the shared garden, you could still see the remnants of the old wash houses.

Our outside bin was plastic with a rubber lid. We placed a black bin liner inside it and the bucket men walked round to the back of the flats, took out the bucket bags and left new ones inside the bucket. I didn't have to take what I now call "the bucket test", where I go outside these days and try to figure out which of the six bins my item should go in.

Indoors, in our living room, a Fyfestone fireplace took up one full wall as a supposed feature. It was made with rough grey stone and was pretty ugly. We later discovered it was put up to cover up dry rot. In this huge fireplace, we had a very basic electric fire which we hardly used as we were lucky enough to have central heating.



Above: Sharon and Robert on their wedding day in May 1990. Right: Sharon's husband Robert in front of the Fyfestone fireplace that took up one full wall of the living room and was a supposed feature but, in reality, was covering up dry rot.

All our furniture was the very fashionable black ash. Our hi-fi unit took up loads of space in our small living room. It was a huge tower, black of course, with combined radio, cassette player, and record turntable. CDs were available but we still mostly played our music on vinyl.

In the kitchen, some of our wedding presents were lethal. I soon stopped using the deep-fat fryer and electric carving knife. I'm very clumsy and they gave me the fear. The electric can opener was useful, though. Our bathroom suite was grey as coloured suites were all the rage. We complemented it with pink accessories – lovely. Mind you, it was better than the dull mustard-coloured suite in our next house.

Our favourite TV shows were Twin Peaks and The Fresh Prince of Bel Air. Quite a contrast when I think about it. We loved The Simpsons when we saw it at our sister and brother-in-law's house but we couldn't afford satellite TV. They kindly recorded a full VHS cassette of episodes for us, and we'd binge-watch them before binge-viewing was even a thing.

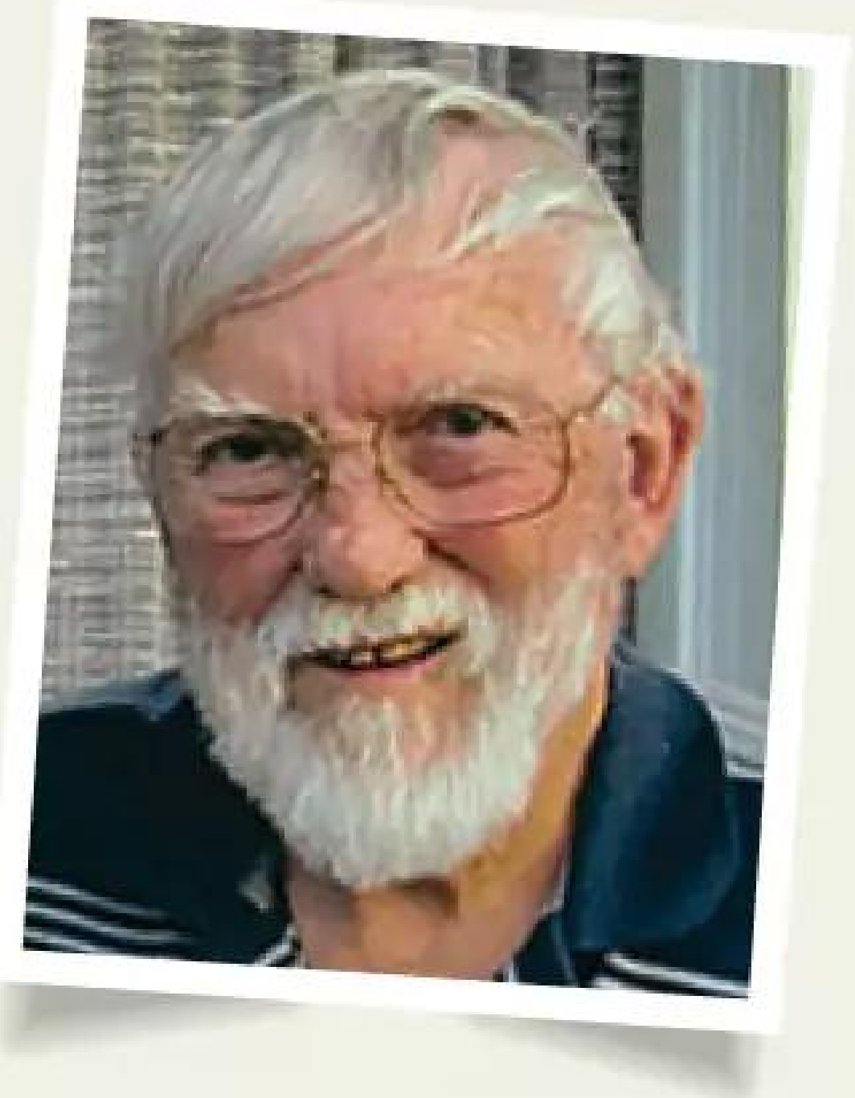
I worked in a bank so was paid monthly into our bank account. Robert worked as a parcel courier and still received his wages in cash in a little brown envelope. He got paid on Thursdays so that's when we did our shopping. Crispy pancakes, toast toppers, and pop tarts often appeared in our trolley. For dessert we enjoyed Arctic roll or strawberry Angel Delight with digestive biscuits broken up in it.

We were woken up for work by our radio cassette alarm which played music, just like in the film Groundhog Day.

Unfortunately, the flat got a compulsory repair order put on it and we had to move out a few times, but we still have fond memories of living there. We had barbecues with our neighbours and there was a real feeling of community. A lot has changed in 35 years but I wonder if you can still buy crispy pancakes and Angel Delight? I'm going to check the next time we go shopping.

Sharon in the kitchen, home to some lethal wedding presents. She soon stopped using the deep-fat fryer and electric carving knife.

Driving to Barcelona



John Grant of Mount Eden, Auckland, New Zealand remembers:

In 1952, I turned 17, got my driver's licence and drove the family's 1931 Austin 7 Swallow down to Barcelona. Not on my own, of course. I was acting as navigator, mechanic and co-driver for my uncle, Francis Peake (1902-1981), who had been tasked by our local priest – Father Pownall, who had many connections in Spain – to go there as an expert consultant to stimulate recovery. Spain was still suffering economic and physical damage from the civil war of the 1930s and reconstruction of damaged property was slow.

Frank – an experienced civil engineer – had spent much of World War Two designing and building prisoner of war camps, military and air force bases in the UK and even acted as clerk of works for the construction of the Windscale (AKA Sellafield) nuclear power research plant.

We started from Bromborough, Wirral and drove to Dover, Kent where straps were fitted under the car's wheels and a crane lifted it on to a medium-size freighter. We went on board and, about four hours later, the car was lifted off in Calais in the same way. At this time there were not enough cars needing to cross to Europe to create a demand for an actual cross-Channel ferry – let alone a Channel Tunnel – even though such a thing had been proposed several times since 1807.

This was our first trip to the continent, but we went prepared. We took plenty of spare parts and oil which had to be stored in the footwells and the back seat as there was no boot. Even the spare wheel was bolted to the rear of the car. The car normally had just a four-gallon petrol tank mounted in the front – over the engine. However, many years earlier, Frank had added a second four-gallon tank which fitted behind the spare wheel, between the rear bumpers. As the car typically did about 50 miles per gallon, this gave us a much better range of around 400 miles.

At that time, petrol cost about 1*s* 6*d* per gallon. Even though this was six years after the end of World War Two, petrol was still rationed in the UK and you had to get an official allowance. On the continent, even though there was no rationing, garages selling petrol were rare, so our route had to be carefully planned to take advantage of those available. We drove south to the Pyrenees, which took about two days as our normal cruising speed was about 45mph and we did not want to be driving through hilly country in the dark as the Swallow's electric lights were very dim.

> “Straps were fitted under the car's wheels and a crane lifted it on to a medium-size freighter.”

Why did Frank involve me? Well, he was an impatient driver, and that car had a "crash gearbox". I could drive it smoothly but you needed to "double declutch". Changing up a gear was not a problem, but when changing down you had to get the revs up to just the right level and Frank was too impatient – even after driving the car for 20 years he was noisy.

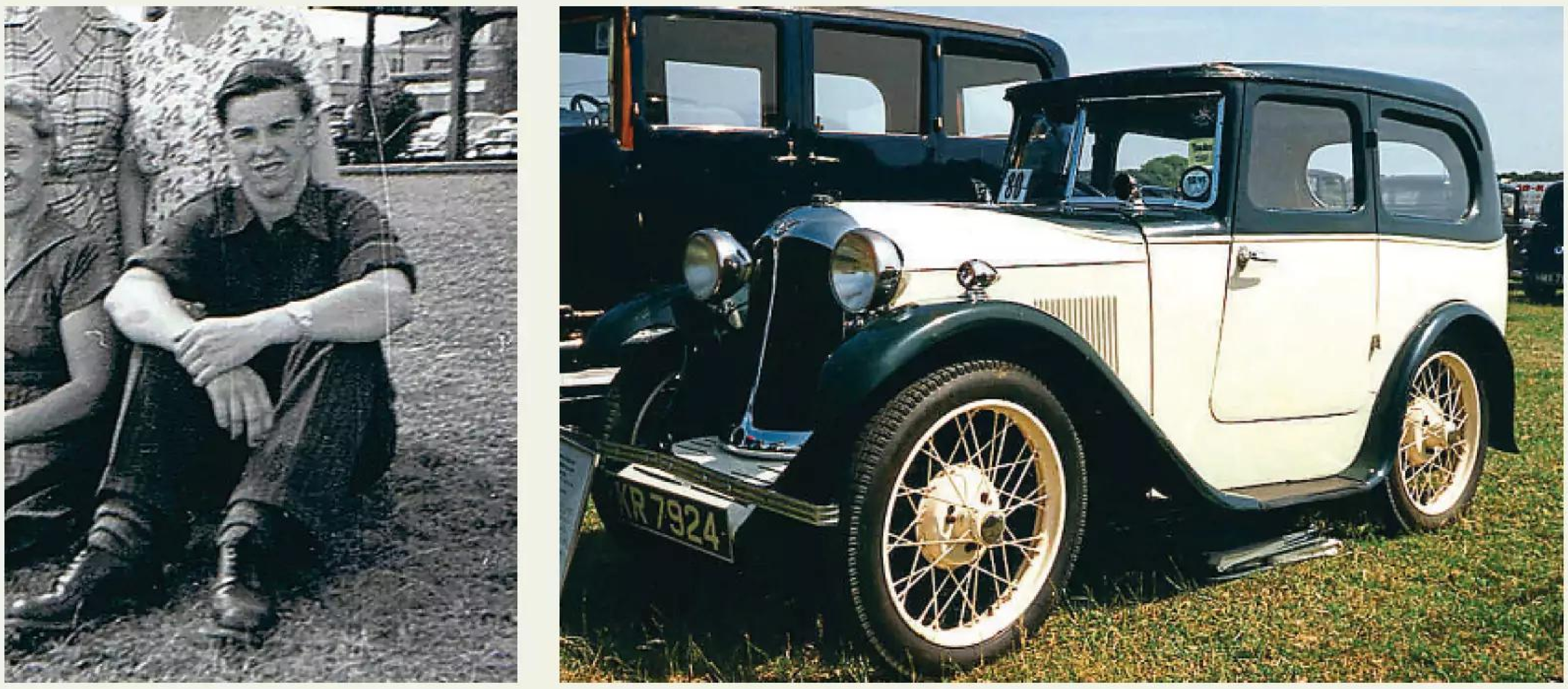
Driving through the Pyrenees took a full day. Even with both the hand and footbrake on, it was necessary to go downhill in bottom gear. Fortunately, other traffic was almost non-existent. We used engine braking. We had two or three punctures which had to be fixed by the side of the road. I had to keep greasing the grease nipples on the kingpins, the steering arms and the brake pivots. I also had to change the oil several times as the old oil got dirty very easily. Once I had used the oil I brought with me, it became a real challenge to source more.

Driving across Spain to Barcelona took a couple of days and finding somewhere to sleep was a gamble. There were no B&Bs, no motels and no hotels. Most of the villages were in ruins. We were fortunate enough to get permission to sleep in barns or farm sheds. Luckily, we had brought a fair bit of food with us.

In Barcelona, we were expected and a room had been arranged for us in a private home. Frank was in meetings most of the time, but I was very bored as there were few people who spoke any English, and I saw nothing at all touristy – no beaches, no historic places – just war damage which looked at least as bad as I had seen in Liverpool. However, it was peaceful – people just wishing to get on with their lives.

The food was different – but also in short supply as farms had been devastated as well as villages and towns. It reminded me of scenes in Ireland where the damage done in the 1920s by the Black and Tans was still very visible.

I believe our trip helped people by giving them new ideas on how to create temporary accommodation at least. I think Frank may have introduced the idea of prefabs there, which, while basic, were certainly better than nothing.



Left: In 1952, 17-year-old John drove the family's 1931 Austin 7 Swallow to Barcelona in order to help with its postwar rebuilding. Right: John pictured as a young man in Canada.

Pier and Then

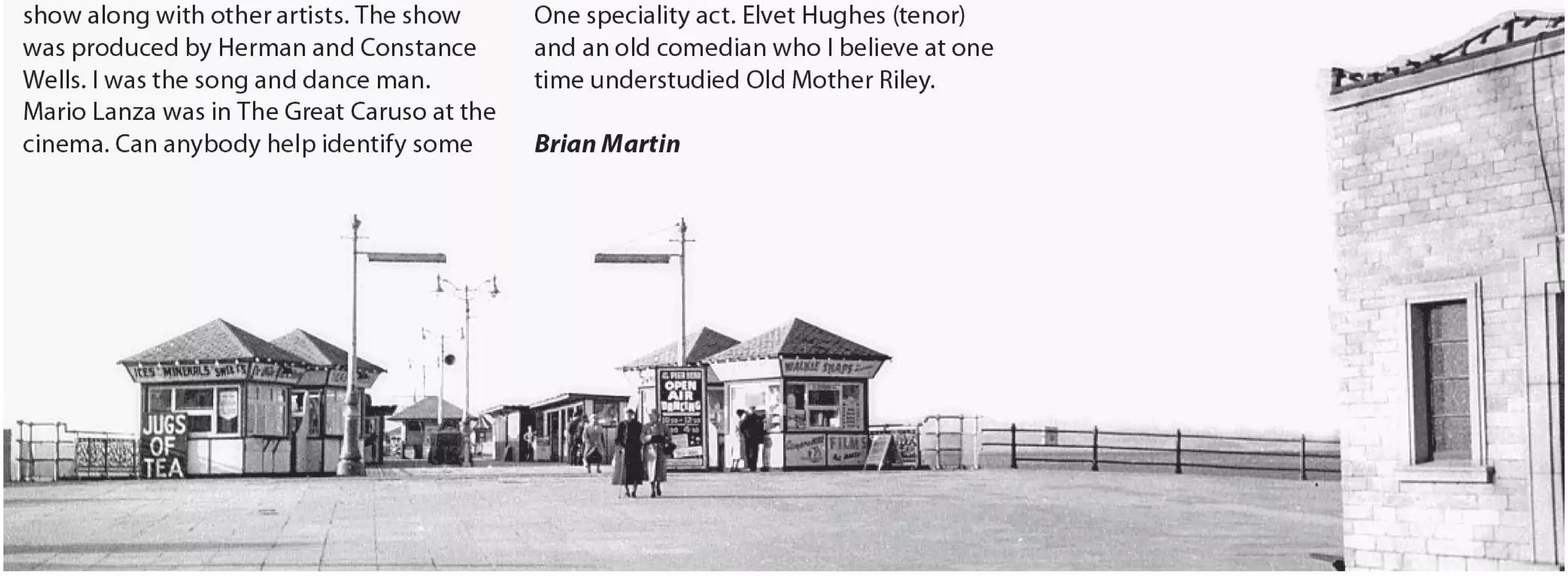
Memories of seaside piers from The Francis Frith Collection

West End Pier, Morecambe, Lancashire

(Photograph taken around 1955)

I appeared in the Follies end of the pier show along with other artists. The show was produced by Herman and Constance Wells. I was the song and dance man. Mario Lanza was in The Great Caruso at the cinema. Can anybody help identify some of the cast? There were four girl dancers. One speciality act. Elvet Hughes (tenor) and an old comedian who I believe at one time understudied Old Mother Riley.

Brian Martin

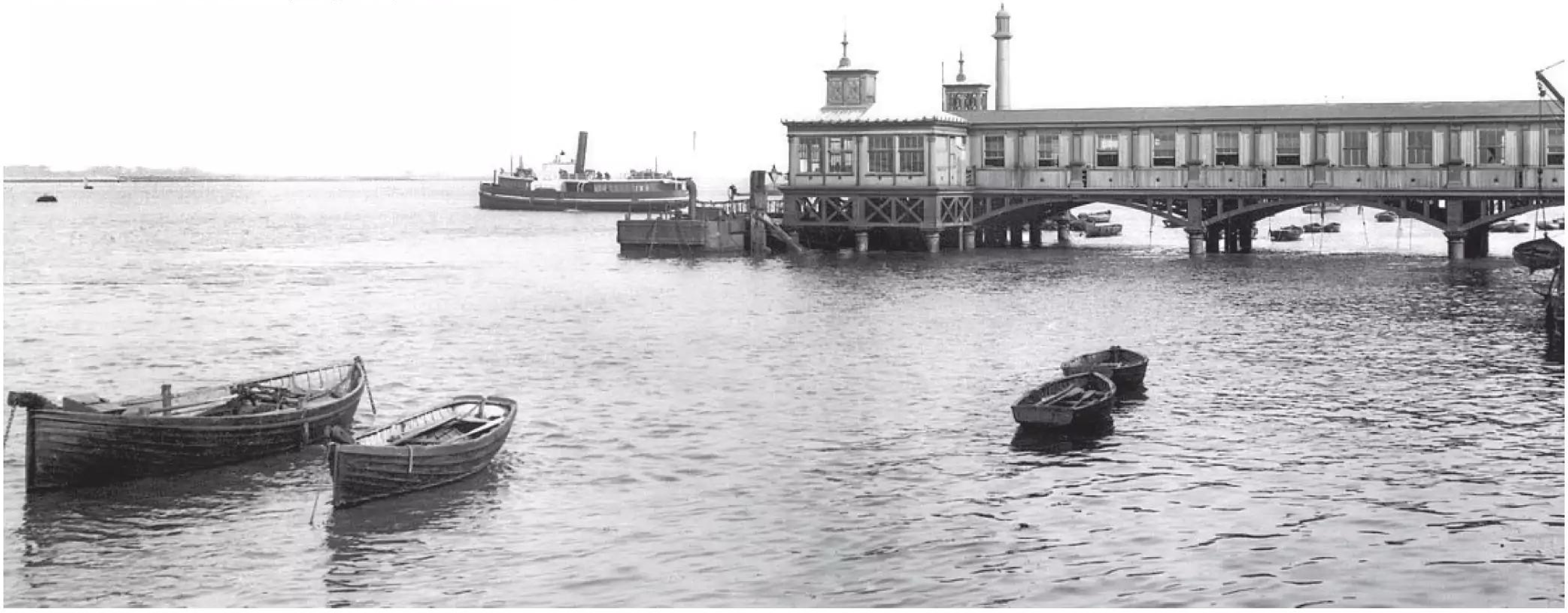


The Ferry, Gravesend, Kent

(Photograph taken 1902)

I can still remember waiting on this pier for the Royal Daffodil or the Royal Sovereign during my childhood, for our day trip up the river. We would do this trip regularly while on holiday with my grandparents in Northfleet. It was one of my favourite days out.

Julia Weekes

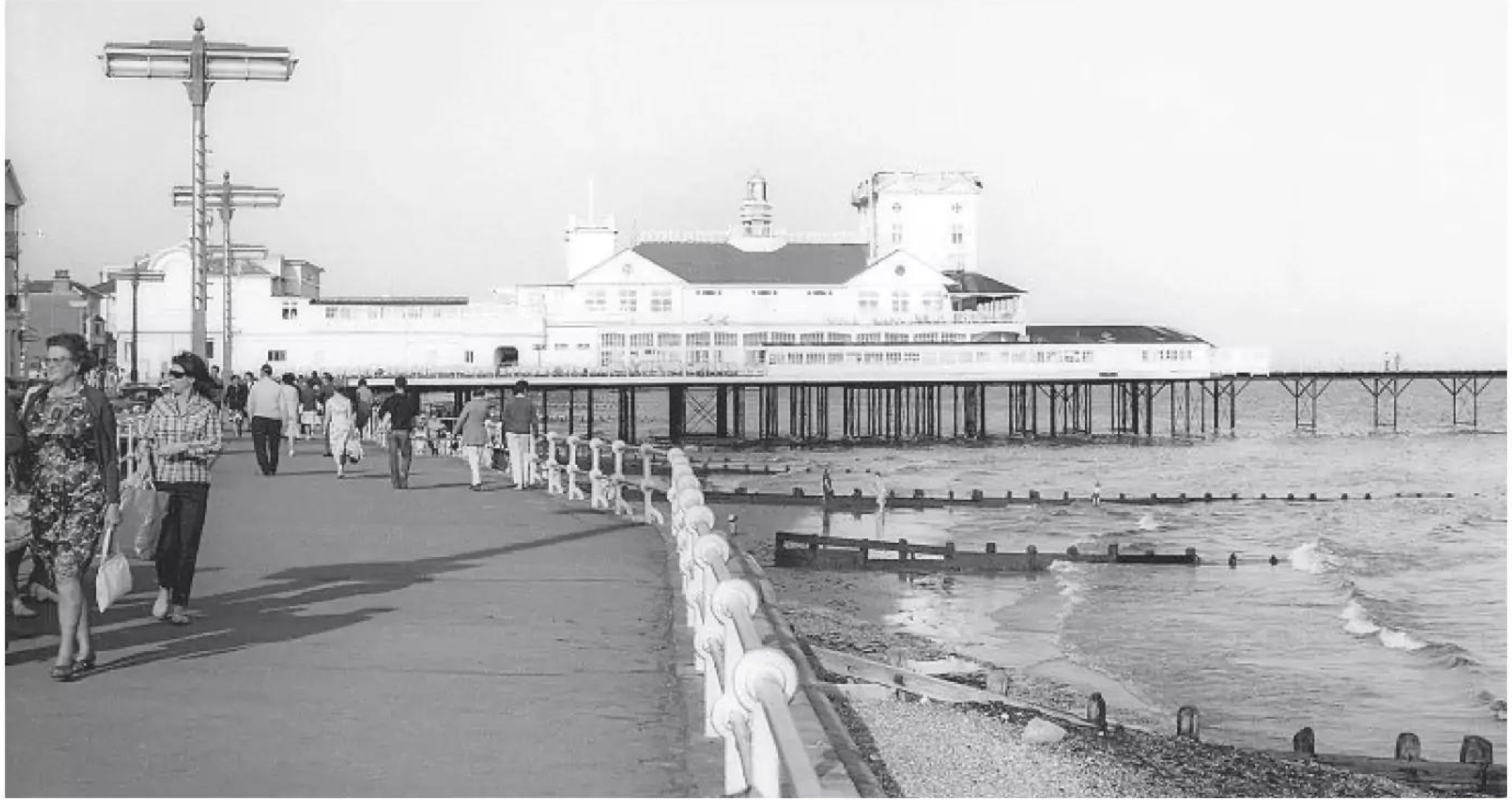


The Pier, Bognor Regis, West Sussex

(Photograph taken around 1960)

The Bognor pier was on my parents' list of forbidden places, but my grandmother and my old aunts took me there after it had been rebuilt after the war. There was a miniature train that took adults and children from one end to the other. As a young child, I also learnt that if I put a penny into the slot of one of those little crane booths, there was only the remotest likelihood of the crane picking up anything, and if it did, its jaws were so slippery that it would drop the cheap toy. Hence, I have never bought a lottery ticket.

Josephine Hammond

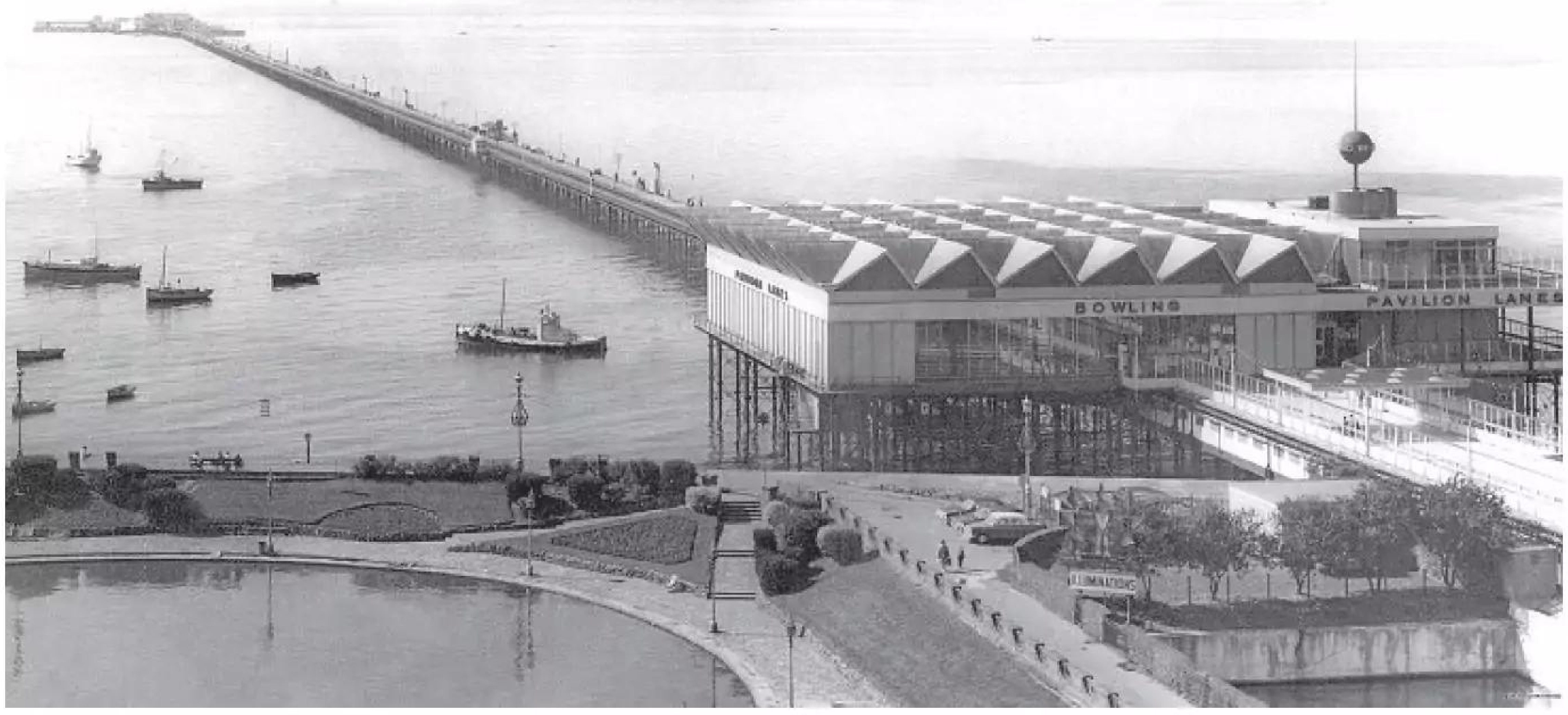


The Pier, Southend-on-Sea, Essex

(Photograph taken around 1960)

I first went to Southend in October 1957 and can remember seeing newspapers on sale with the fantastic news about the successful launch of the Sputnik satellite. I recall the green and cream electric trains that trundled up and back along the mile-long pier. My four-year-old brother wouldn't walk that far but I was glad he was the excuse for my ride on the train. When we returned in the evening after our lovely day on the pier, Dad found a parking ticket on the car. He was so cross, as there were no parking restriction signs, so we had to find the police station to go and sort it out. Apparently, there had been yellow lines in that road but it had been resurfaced and the lines not yet repainted. The police let us off as we were visitors and were not to know about this.

John Howard Norfolk

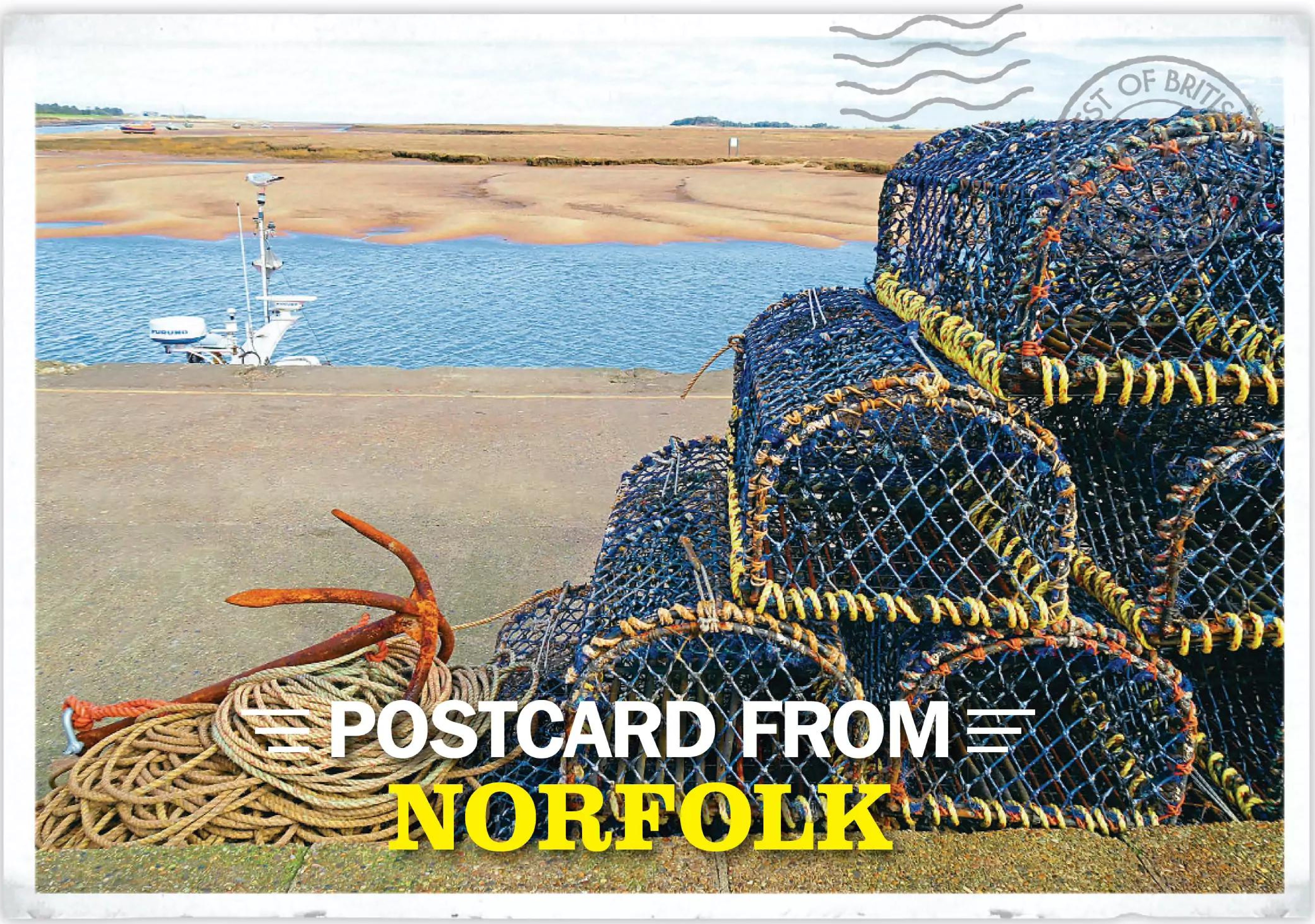


The Francis Frith Collection

More than 150 years ago, pioneering Victorian photographer Francis Frith set up his company with the grand plan of photographing all the cities, towns and villages of Britain. His two sons, and later his grandson, continued Frith's massive task, and The Francis Frith Collection now contains more than 360,000 images taken between 1860 and 1970. Over 250,000 images are available to view online. Prints of the Frith photographs, as well as a wide range of other products and local history books, featuring these vintage images, are available from the website francisfrith.com

Share Your Memories

The Francis Frith Collection invites you to visit the website and add memories to the places featured in the photographs, or comment on others already added. Seeing a place from your past can rekindle forgotten or long-held memories. Why not add your story for others to read and enjoy – making your memories and stories part of this growing chronicle of British life?



POSTCARD FROM NORFOLK

With his Austin Cambridge long consigned to the great garage in the sky, **Bob Barton** enjoys a scenic journey by bus through Nelson's County

In the early 1970s, I relied on a 1961 Austin Cambridge for weekend jaunts along the salty north Norfolk coast. "Relied" is probably the wrong word, as the car wasn't exactly reliable. I would make a mental note of the whereabouts of emergency AA phone boxes and wayside garages in case of mechanical problems or a leaking radiator. These days, I prefer someone else to do the driving. I was pleased to avail myself of the Coastliner and Coasthopper on a recent trip. These are the names given to two bus routes between Cromer, Wells-next-the-Sea and King's Lynn (lovenorfolk.co.uk/norfolk-coastliner-coasthopper). It's such a scenic journey that it gets its own chapter in a book of favourite bus rides, Bus-Pass Britain, published by Bradt Guides.

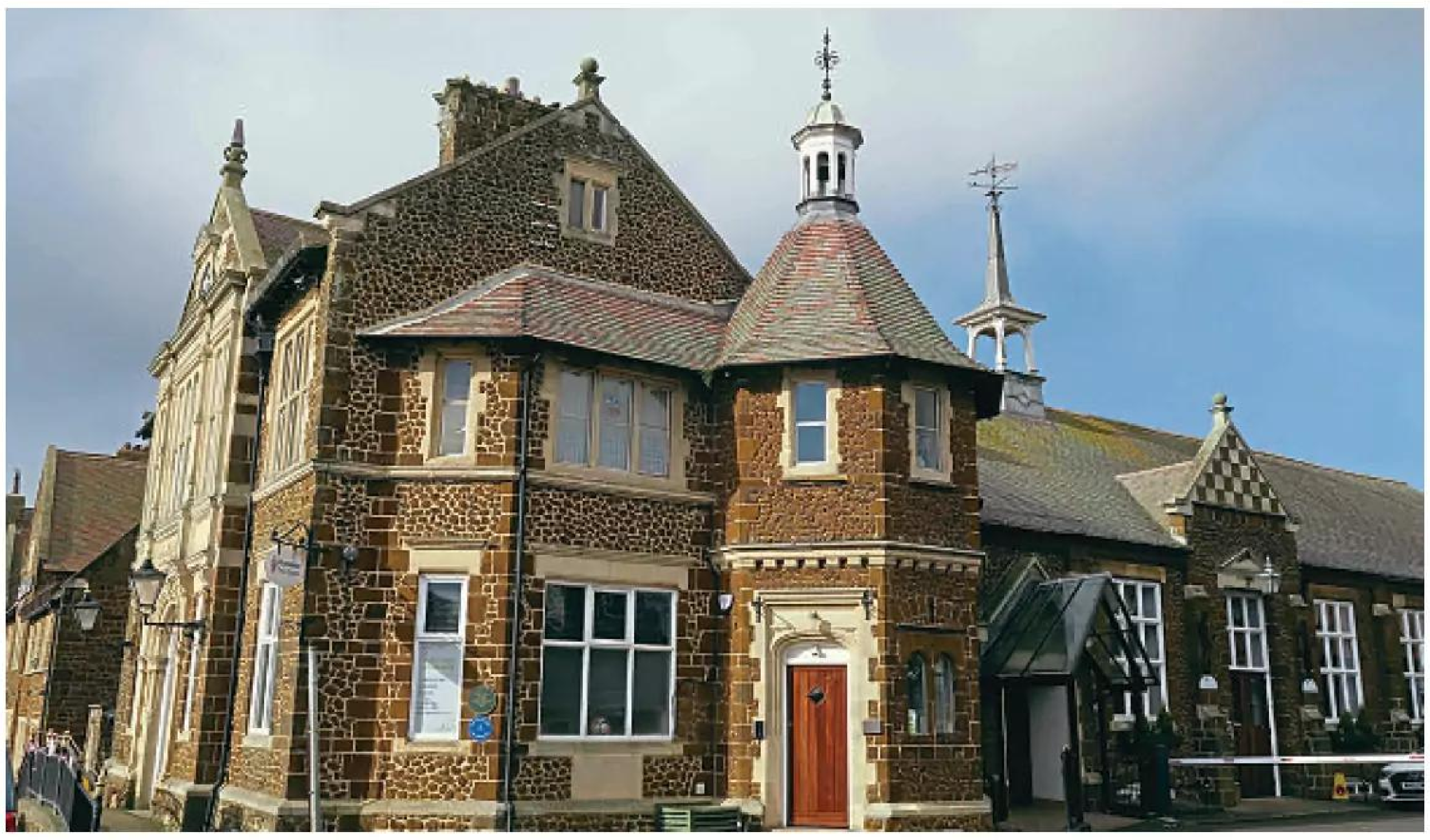
Public transport was limited when I visited the area in the 1970s. Now, the red double-deckers of Lynx Buses – and the bright yellow single-deckers of Sanderson Coaches – are a regular sight. There are still fond memories of the old days, however. I met a fellow passenger who reminisced about services run 50 years ago by the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company. He told me they even provided a parcels and newspaper delivery service. Packets would be dropped off by the driver or conductor, while grocery stores and post offices would hang a notice in their window if they needed something collected. It was a personal service compared to today, he said.

I arrived in Norfolk by train, skirting the sparkling waters of the Norfolk Broads on the Bittern Line (bitternline.com) from Norwich to Sheringham. This coastal town

SHERINGHAM PRESERVATION SOCIETY
THE FIRST BOMB
TO BE DROPPED ON BRITAIN
IN WORLD WAR 1
FELL IN THIS YARD AT 8.30PM
19TH JANUARY 1915

Top: Although Wells is actually "next the sea", marshes and encroaching sands are only a stone's throw away, ready to gobble up the harbour when no one is looking. Left: A blue plaque marking the first bomb to be dropped on Britain in World War One can be found near Sheringham's Lobster Pot pub.

Photographs: Bob Barton



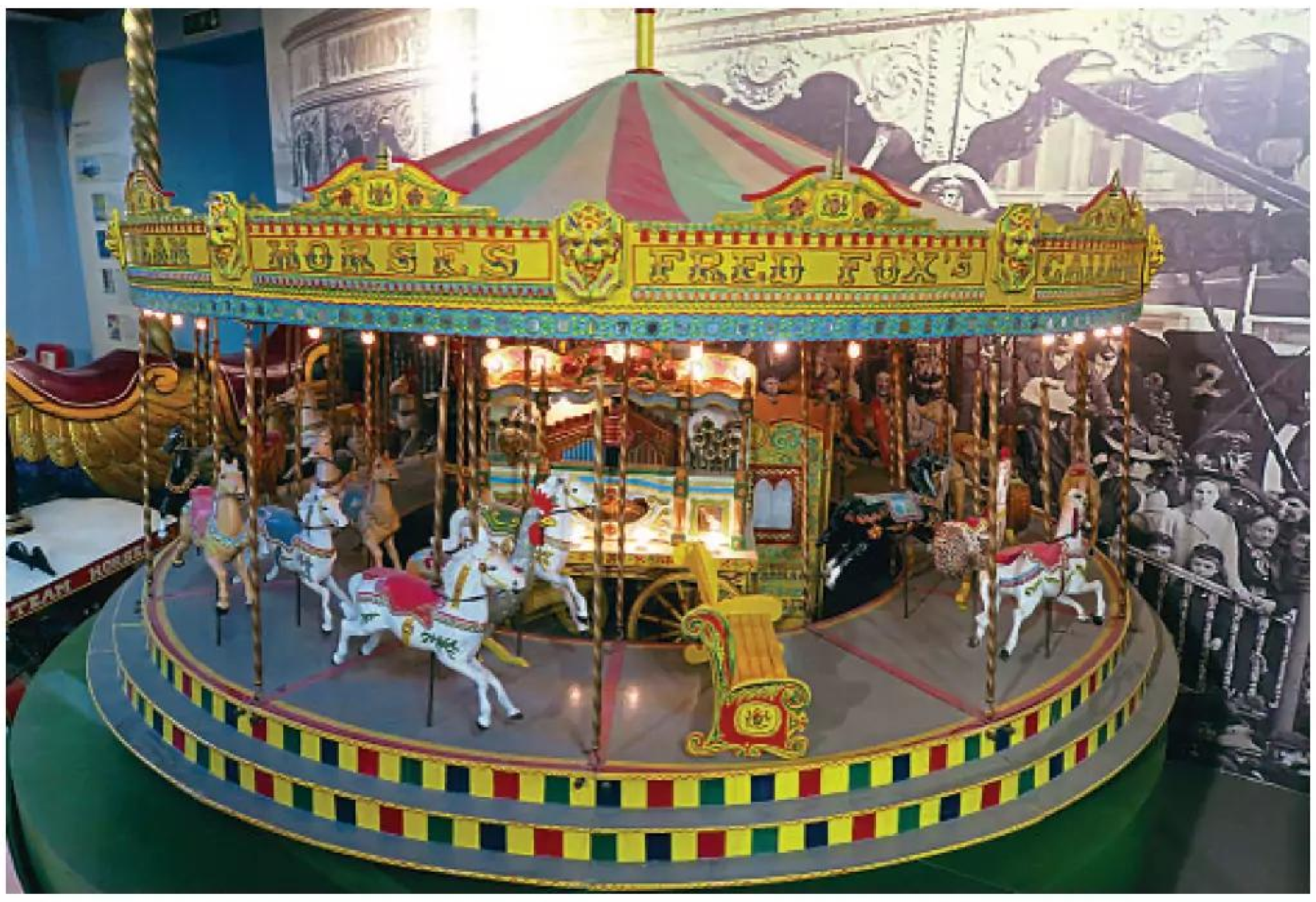
Left: The focal point of Cley next the Sea is its windmill, which can be seen from a mile away in every direction. It was converted into a bed and breakfast in the 1920s. Right: Bob was impressed by Hunstanton's Toytown-like town hall, built of local carrstone.

is friendly, with cosy pubs, a small theatre and some eclectic shops. The first thing I "met" was a full-sized Dalek standing outside an Aladdin's cave of a store, Sheringham Collectables (01263 822540, sheringhamcollectables.co.uk). The helpful owner directed me to a blue plaque I was seeking. The first bomb to be dropped in World War One – from a massive Zeppelin airship – fell here in 1915. I found it (the plaque, not the bomb) near the Lobster Pot pub. If the culprit's aim had been a little adrift, the explosive device would have plopped harmlessly into the North Sea.

My first bus, bearing the Coasthopper logo, arrived on time outside the station. I was joined by a party of walkers with their dogs: canines are regular passengers, apparently. I soon got my first sight of the salt marshes that are a trademark of this coast. The reeds form a waving golden carpet, unbroken towards the sea, while yellow gorse added roadside colour. A few people got off at a nature reserve visitor centre (the area is the nearest thing to paradise for birdwatchers) but my first stop was nearby Cley next the Sea. It hasn't been beside the sea for a few centuries, thanks to the retreating shoreline, but the locals haven't seen fit to add "formerly" to an already lengthy moniker.

The village is a string of pebble-faced and brick-built houses. I enjoyed browsing in a well-stocked bookshop, a deli in an old forge, and admiring pottery in the cleverly named Made in Cley. A pebble-dashed smokehouse was closed, so no kippers for me this time. Then I walked towards the sea along a riverside path. The seemingly endless expanse of reeds under a sunny blue sky, enhanced by fresh air and silence, quite overpowered my senses. I'd been amid the concrete and glass of central London only a few hours previously, so it was cathartic.

Among the highlights of Lynn Museum is the "cockerel galloper", a working model of a steam merry-go-round by local fairground maker Frederick Savage.



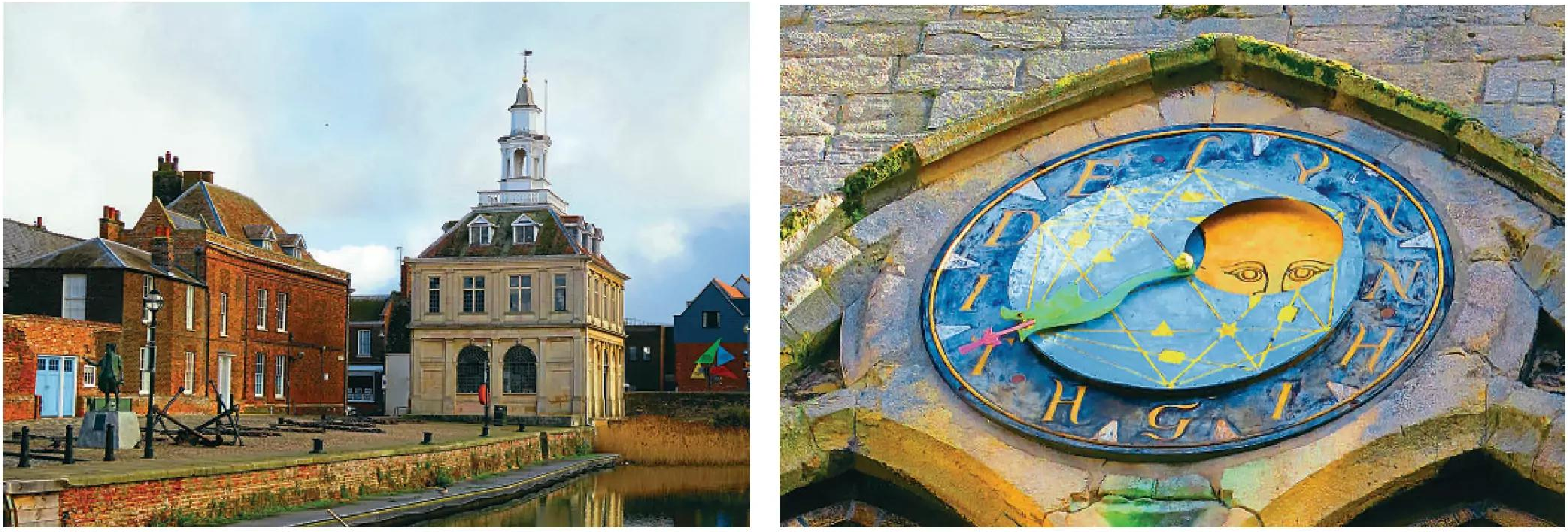
The focal point of Cley is its windmill, which can be seen from a mile away in every direction. It has long since stopped milling, being converted to a bed and breakfast in the 1920s. A walker told me the singer James Blunt spent time there as a youngster, as his family inherited it. He added it was now a popular location for weddings and funeral wakes.

My next stop was Wells-next-the-Sea, which seemed like a metropolis by comparison. I'd never explored the town before. It was enjoyable strolling the long main street of little shops, to a once-bustling quayside now serene and dotted with boats. Yes, this place is actually "next the sea", I thought. Yet the marshes and encroaching sands are only a stone's throw away, ready to gobble up the harbour when no one is looking. I explored some of the yards that once housed sail and rope-makers, admiring rooftop towers and garrets where locals once watched for returning boats.

HUNSTANTON

A lofty maltings (01328 710885, wellsmaltings.org.uk) has been given a new lease of life as a theatre, cafe and heritage centre. I learned about the town's centuries-old battle against smugglers. And a vicious moon-lit gunfight between bootleggers and a party of the king's dragoons.

Wells is normally the changeover point to the Coastliner bus but there was a problem. A driver informed us the coastal road going west was closed for maintenance at Holkham. It meant a long diversion south to Fakenham,



Left: After ambling through time-warp streets and marketplaces, Bob admired King's Lynn's Custom House. Right: King's Lynn's working 350-year-old tide clock, sometimes called a "moon dial", shows when the next high tide will be, as well as phases of the moon.

before I could return to the coast, beyond the roadworks. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise. I sat at the front of the top deck, always my favourite seat on buses, enjoying a scenic tour of parts of the county I hadn't expected to see. A picture window gave a fine view of the "wide sky" scenery – surprisingly hilly in parts – and a panorama of Little Walsingham, long a place of pilgrimage, as the double-decker squeezed through impossibly narrow streets. Then there was the village of Burnham Thorpe, Lord Nelson's birthplace.

I'd planned an overnight stop at Hunstanton, the only west-facing town on the east coast. A relatively new resort, it was created because of a railway arriving in 1862. I was impressed by its Toytown-like town hall, built of local carrstone, the floral parks and views across The Wash. Chatty volunteers in the heritage centre and museum, housed in a former bank (hunstantonsociety.wixsite.com/hunsoc) directed me to a video in the bank vault. They explained their railway closed in the late 1960s; I realised I'd booked to stay in the former railway hotel.

From a glass case, one of them removed the smallest exhibit I've ever handled: a fish carved from animal bone. They explained it was a Stanhope optical device, a miniature souvenir popular in Edwardian times. By holding it towards the light and squinting through the tail, I was able to discern an image of the town's pier. (This was sadly destroyed in a storm more than 40 years ago.)

The last leg of my bus jaunt took me to King's Lynn, this historic port long having been on my wishlist. I strolled a park, along a chestnut-lined avenue past almshouses with candy-twist chimneys. This led to the 15th century Red Mount Chapel where I imagined the pilgrims that once prayed there, en route to Walsingham. Then I ambled through time-warp streets and marketplaces and admired the town's iconic Custom House. I lost myself in Lynn Museum (01553 775001, museums.norfolk.gov.uk/lynn-museum). Among its highlights is the "cockerel galloper", a working model of a steam merry-go-round by local fairground maker Frederick Savage. How I loved these as a youngster.

High on a tower of the minster, I spotted a most unusual timepiece. I was told it is a working 350-year-old tide clock, sometimes called a "moon dial". Instead of telling the time, it shows when the next high tide will be, as well as phases of the moon. It moves forward 48 minutes a day and, instead of numbers, letters on the face spell out "Lynn high tide".

Overlooking the River Ouse, the Crown & Mitre pub at King's Lynn is full of maritime artefacts.

Doing this trip by bus was a little adventure. While I had to study timetables, it was a pleasing way to see the countryside and meet fellow passengers. I also enjoyed listening to the automatic announcements naming various stops, such as: "Bottom Farm, alight here for Wild Ken Hill." It also took me back to my childhood days of dinging bells and conductors calling: "Hold very tight, please."

REFRESHMENTS

The George and Dragon, High Street, Cley next the Sea, Holt NR25 7RN (01263 741578, georgeanddragoncley.co.uk)
Popular pub serving local ales such as Moon Gazer and Woodforde's. Old village photos displayed; garden faces the marshes.

Golden Lion Hotel, The Green, Hunstanton PE36 6BQ (01485 532688, thegoldenlionhunstanton.co.uk)
Imposing and centrally located, the first building in the new resort (1846). Greene King ales.

Crown & Mitre, Ferry Street, King's Lynn PE30 1LJ (01553 611899, facebook.com/p/Crown-Mitre)
A pub since the 1740s, it overlooks the River Ouse, serves a changing ale selection and is full of maritime artefacts.

All serve meals.

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The Sport of Kings (and Queens)

Michael Montagu looks back on the history of Royal Ascot and Henley Royal Regatta

Summer wouldn't be complete without two famous sporting fixtures which are an integral part of the legendary "London Season", although neither takes place in London. First up is horse racing, the sport originally known as "the sport of kings". Due to the passion for racing of the late Queen Elizabeth II and Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, it is now really "the sport of queens".

Twenty-five miles or so west of London, in the leafy Royal County of Berkshire, is Ascot, home of the renowned racecourse. The course was founded by Queen Anne in 1711 when, out near Windsor Castle, she came upon Ascot Heath which she described as "ideal for horses to gallop at full stretch." On 11 August that same year, the first race meeting was held. The prize for Her Majesty's Plate was 100 guineas, with the race open to any horse aged six or over and carrying a weight of 12 stone. The initial race had seven runners. Unlike today's races, there were four heats, each four miles long. The name of the winner was not recorded. In honour of its founder, the opening race each year is called the Queen Anne Stakes.

The racecourse buildings were originally of a temporary nature, with the first permanent stand, accommodating 1,650 spectators, being built in 1794. A few years later, in 1813, parliament passed an act ensuring the future of Ascot Heath as a place for public racing. The first Royal Ascot meeting seems to have been held during the early years of the reign of King George III in 1768, with the Gold Cup race being inaugurated in 1807. It is the main race on the third day of the royal meeting, Thursday, traditionally called Ladies' Day. Until 1939, the four-day royal meeting was the only racing held at Ascot each year.

The Crown Estate still owns the racecourse. Until 1901, it was managed by the Master of the Royal Buckhounds. Since then, the official in charge is the Sovereign's Representative. A further Act of Parliament in 1913 brought in the Ascot Authority; the Sovereign's Representative being made senior trustee. A more recent change means that the course is now known as Ascot Authority (Holdings) Ltd. The course closed in 2004 for a £200m renovation. Queen Elizabeth II reopened it in June 2006. The expenditure of a further £10m was necessary at the end of 2006, to improve sightlines from the grandstand. Ascot became ECOsmart accredited last May, making it the first racecourse globally to be awarded an accolade that recognises organisations demonstrating a comprehensive approach to environmental sustainability.

For those attending in the Royal Enclosure, high sartorial standards naturally apply. Gentlemen must wear either grey or black morning dress, together with a top hat. Ladies are required to wear a hat and a dress that covers the shoulders and midriff. The hats often find fame in their own right, sometimes for the wrong reasons. Each year, attention-seekers try to get media exposure by attempting to gain entry improperly dressed. A newcomer to the Royal

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Top: Bets used to be laid on what colour Queen Elizabeth II would wear every day of the Royal Ascot meeting.

Left: The first Henley Royal Regatta only lasted one afternoon but its popularity has seen it grow over time to six days.

Photographs: (Henley Royal Regatta) Benedict Tufnell/Henley Royal Regatta

Left: Management of Henley Royal Regatta and maintenance of its standards is in the hands of the stewards. Sartorial standards are high. Right: The Gold Cup race of the Royal Ascot meeting was inaugurated in 1807 and is the main race on Ladies' Day.

Enclosure must be sponsored by someone who has attended for at least four years.

The royal meeting this year runs from 17-21 June. As with many such events connected with the London Season, it appears that some people's raison d'être for attending is being seen, rather than an interest in seeing the event itself.

Just up the road from Ascot, although in Oxfordshire rather than Berkshire, we find Henley Royal Regatta. Probably the most famous regatta in the world, it will take place between 1-6 July this year over its traditional course of 2,112 metres (1 mile, 550 yards in old money) on one of the most picturesque stretches of the River Thames. The regatta was always one of the fixed points of my year as a child, as our house was situated right on the riverbank by the finishing post. Our guests would be ferried across by launch to be always served the same lunch and tea each year.

The regatta was founded on 26 March 1839 during a meeting at Henley-on-Thames town hall. The founder, Captain Edmund Gardiner, made the proposal that: "From lively interest which had been manifested at the various boat races which have taken place on the Henley reach during the last few years, and the great influx of visitors on such occasions, this meeting is of the opinion that the establishing of an annual regatta, under judicious and respectable management, would not only be productive of the most beneficial results to the town of Henley, but from its peculiar attractions would also be a source of amusement and gratification to the neighbourhood, and the public in general."

The first regatta only lasted one afternoon, but by 1840 its popularity meant that it was taking up two days. This increased to three in 1886, four in 1906, five in 1986, finally reaching six in 2021 (after the cancellation of the 2020 event due to Covid). Twenty-one prizes are awarded, the most prestigious being the Grand Challenge Cup, first presented at the 1839 regatta, along with a prize of 100 guineas. The second most senior award is the Stewards' Challenge Cup, presented since 1841, the Princess Elizabeth Challenge Cup was produced in 1946, to commemorate the first visit to the regatta of Princess Elizabeth, with the Queen Mother Challenge Cup being added in 1980.

Naturally, such a well-known event has had well-known names connected with it. The first patron, assuming that position in 1851, was Prince Albert, consort of Queen Victoria, and after whom a prize is named. Every monarch has accepted the patronage since, which allows the regatta to use the prefix Royal.

One unfortunate incident was the 1920 ban on John Kelly senior, a future US Olympic rowing champion. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, he had worked as a bricklayer as a young man, so was excluded under the rule banning manual labourers from competing. The second reason was the rowing club he belonged to had, in 1905, raised money to pay for their trip to Henley for the 1906 regatta. This made them professionals under the stewards' rules.

On both sides of the Atlantic, the ban was seen as an attempt to keep the Diamond Sculls trophy out of American hands. John Kelly Jr was able to compete in 1947; naturally he won the Diamond Sculls denied to his father. John Kelly Jr's daughter was Grace Kelly, the Oscar-winning actress and wife of Prince Rainier of Monaco. Princess Grace honoured the regatta in 1981, by acting as prizegiver, just over a year before her untimely death. The regatta has offered a prize in her name since 2001.

A further ban in 1936 led to the manual labour rule being abandoned in 1937; the stewards were deeply embarrassed that an Australian team preparing for the Berlin Olympics had to be banned because as policemen they were classed as manual labourers.

Management of the regatta and maintenance of its sartorial standards is in the hands of the stewards, a self-elected committee of 60, comprised mostly of former rowers. Sartorial standards, especially in the exclusive stewards' enclosure, are high. Ladies' dresses must cover the knee and a hat is preferred. Gentlemen must wear a suit, blazer and flannels or, curiously, evening dress with a tie. Mobile phones are banned, naturally. Many elderly gentlemen wear their old school rowing caps, offering the curious sight of a small, faded, tasselled cap on a large, elderly head.

Be warned, if you want to enter that exclusive enclosure you must either be a member or the guest of a member. The limit on the number of members is 5,000, with a waiting list lasting up to 10 years.

Abbey Road Studios

Keeping Score

David A Ellis interviews composer Warren Bennett whose work has been performed on television shows such as London's Burning and New Tricks

Musician, songwriter and film composer Warren Bennett followed his father, Brian Bennett, into the world of music. Brian is a film composer and was for many years the drummer with instrumental group the Shadows. Born in 1962, Warren began his musical career in 1977 and has worked on numerous projects, collaborating with his father on the soundtrack for the Dennis Hopper science fiction film The American Way. His television work has included incidental music on shows such as Birds of a Feather and New Tricks, while he composed the title music used for series 11-13 of London's Burning.

At school, he played in various bands and then took up a musical career. He learned to play the drums from an early age and by 12 he took up the piano, followed by guitar.

Warren didn't attend university or music school and is self-taught. He has always written songs, even when composing film scores, and is also an arranger and music producer.

"I've never learned to read music very well. I can look at something and figure it out, but I can't sight read," he says.

Asked how he relates to production people, for example a director who is not musically knowledgeable, he says: "The main thing to remember is that you are working for him or her. The director will know what is wanted and if it takes a bit of time to find out what that is, so be it. It is a collaboration, and the director/composer friendship is very important. I would also add the editor into that mix."

As to how he became interested in scoring for films and TV, Warren says he had always been fascinated by scores. "When I left school, I worked for a company called Bruton Music in London. That was a great education, watching composers write to a brief."

Warren is happy to tackle any genre, and in 2019 scored his first horror movie called Tales from the Lodge, directed by Abigail Blackmore. He loved working on it. As for a favourite score he has worked on, he says: "I have enjoyed them all. I can honestly say I have never had a bad experience. The TV series New Tricks was special and the whole crew were a happy bunch. I scored nine series of that show."

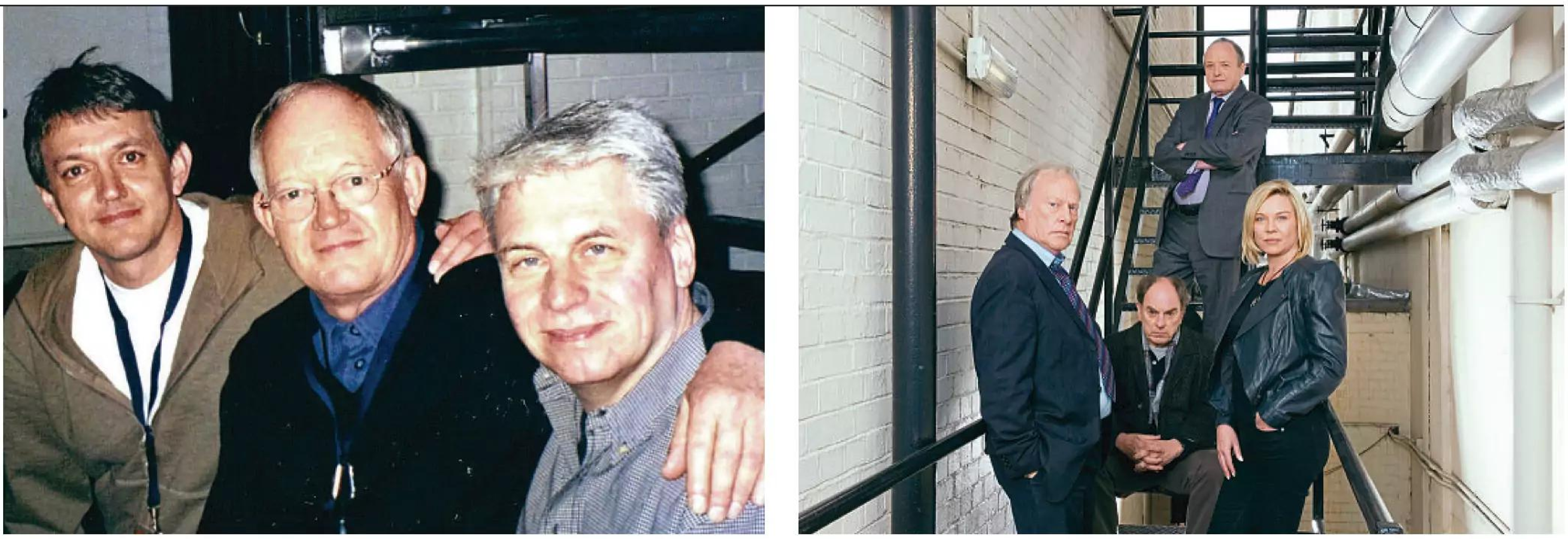
When taking on a project, he says that apart from the script being appealing, the deciding factor would be the director and producer. "With some scripts you can hear what kind of music you would like to write by reading it. If that is the case, I am usually keen to get started straight away."

Warren first likes to go to the script, which he usually gets up front but adds it is far better to hear it read by the cast. That way you get an idea of what the characters will be like before you have even seen any cuts. Regarding viewing a rough cut, he says: "I'll always watch the rough cut and then the final cut before a music spotting session. Sometimes this is done after reading the script or attending the read through. If it is something I feel is working, I'll send some rough ideas to the editor and director. If they like it, they can use it as a temp score."

Asked if he records musical ideas before forgetting them, he says: "I am

Top: Warren Bennett learned to play the drums from an early age and by 12 he took up the piano, followed by guitar.

Photographs: (Tour) Creative Commons/Bruce Marvin, (New Tricks) Wall to Wall 2010



Left: Pictured with his father, Shadows' drummer Brian Bennett, and the band's bass player Mark Griffiths, Warren played keyboards on the Shadows' 2005 European tour. Right: Warren enjoyed working on New Tricks, scoring nine series of the crime comedy drama.

always putting ideas down on my phone, humming or singing an idea when out for a walk."

> **"I never experience writer's block but that is not to say that everything is always worth pursuing."**

Apart from composing, Warren also arranges music. He enjoys arranging and, with some collaborations he has done, he has just been sent a top line and chords, which he enjoys fleshing out. Asked if he sits in on recording sessions, he says: "Well, if they are my sessions, of course. I like to sit in the control room and listen and talk with the engineer and director as things progress."

Warren says musical ideas come easily to him. "I never experience writer's block but that is not to say that everything is always worth pursuing. I have a ton of once great ideas that will never see the light of day."

When asked if he ever tried to tackle everything he was offered at the same time, he says: "I remember accepting everything and it got a bit out of hand. I was scoring the TV show London's Burning and another programme called The Ambassador. At the time I was on a UK/European tour with Shadows guitarist Hank Marvin. I was playing in Copenhagen and had to fly back to the UK for a spotting session and then dash back for the next show. I was exhausted; never again."

From 1991-2000, Warren was a performer and arranger on Hank Marvin's solo albums and wrote the title track from Marvin's first album called Into the Light. Warren was a member of Marvin's touring band on each of his six solo tours between 1994 and 2002.

When it comes to how long he gets to complete a score, he says: "It varies, you could always do with more time. I prescribe to the theory that nothing is actually finished, you just get to the point where you have to hand it over."

He has his own record company called Waffles, named after his first dog. "I was making an album with the guitarist Mark Griffiths and we just wanted to put it out in a limited edition, so I set it up. I then used it for a few other projects."

Warren also has his own recording studio. He spends every day in it. "I do something every day, even if only for my own amusement. I work on my own but when I need something to sound extra special, I get an engineer in." 🇬🇧

Hank MARVIN
into the light
HANK MARVIN
'INTO THE LIGHT'
• The Original Studio Album •
• 180g Heavyweight Red Colour Vinyl •
• 2LP Set •

A member of Hank Marvin's touring band, Warren wrote the title track for the Shadows guitarist's debut solo album, Into the Light.

The Serious Side of Ken Dodd

Philip Williams and **David Williams** look back on the comedian's prolific and fruitful recording career

Over the years, there have been many comedians who have seen their novelty records climb the rungs of the Official UK Singles Chart, with several even managing to reach the prestigious No 1 spot. Many of these hits were released in support of charitable causes such as Comic Relief. However, it is quite surprising the comedy records from one of Britain's most beloved entertainers, the late Sir Ken Dodd, never achieved similar chart success.

> **"Tears sold more than 2m copies, earning the distinction of being the third bestselling single of the 1960s."**

Despite the popularity of his songs such as Where's Me Shirt and the Nikky Nokky Noo Song, which were performed alongside his iconic Diddy Men from Knotty Ash and received considerable radio airplay, they failed to make a significant impression on the charts.

Nonetheless, Ken Dodd remains a remarkable figure in the music industry, having sold more records than any other comedian. Amid the numerous accolades celebrating his comedic brilliance, it is often overlooked that between 1960 and the mid-1970s, Dodd enjoyed a thriving recording career as an unexpected romantic balladeer, selling millions of records globally. His journey began in 1960 with the release by Decca Records of his debut single, Love is Like a Violin. This track enjoyed a remarkable run, spending 18 weeks in the charts and peaking at No 8, ultimately becoming one of Dodd's signature tunes and the one that announced his entrances on stage.

Between 1960 and 1975, Dodd achieved an impressive 18 Top 40 singles, most of which were sentimental ballads. One notable exception was the lively Happiness, released in 1964. While it only reached No 31 on the charts, it became one of his most beloved tracks and is a song that remains synonymous with "Doddy". Happiness served as the closing number for all his performances and was penned by Bill Anderson, an American television host and acclaimed country singer whose work Dodd admired. Earlier in 1964, Ken had also found success with the ballad Eight by Ten and, the previous year, had a hit with Still, both written by Anderson. This blend of comedic charm and musical talent solidified Ken Dodd's status as a unique figure in the music landscape.

A remarkable point in Ken Dodd's illustrious showbusiness career was

Above: Between 1960 and the mid-1970s, Ken Dodd enjoyed a thriving recording career as an unexpected romantic balladeer, selling millions of records globally.

Photograph: (Beatles) ITV/Shutterstock

reached 60 years ago, highlighted by his debut at the London Palladium during the 1965 summer season. The production, titled Doddy's Here, opened on 17 April and quickly became a phenomenal success, running for an impressive 42½ weeks before concluding in February 1966. During this time, Dodd achieved a remarkable feat, earning a spot in the Guinness World Records by delivering 1,500 jokes in a single 3½-hour performance.

In August 1965, Columbia Records released a single that would ultimately become Doddy's most successful record to date, titled Tears, also known as Tears for Souvenirs. This remarkable record made its chart debut in September and enjoyed an impressive run, remaining in the charts until February 1966, spanning a total of 24 weeks, with five of them spent in the coveted No 1 position.

The single achieved extraordinary commercial success, selling more than two million copies, thereby not only establishing itself as the bestselling hit single of that year but also earning the distinction of being the third bestselling single of the entire decade. It was outperformed only by two legendary tracks from the Beatles, She Loves You, which claimed the top spot, and I Want to Hold Your Hand, which secured second place. Additionally, the Beatles occupied the fourth position with Can't Buy Me Love and the fifth position with I Feel Fine, resulting in an impressive statistic that the top five bestselling singles of the 1960s were all attributed to artists hailing from Liverpool.

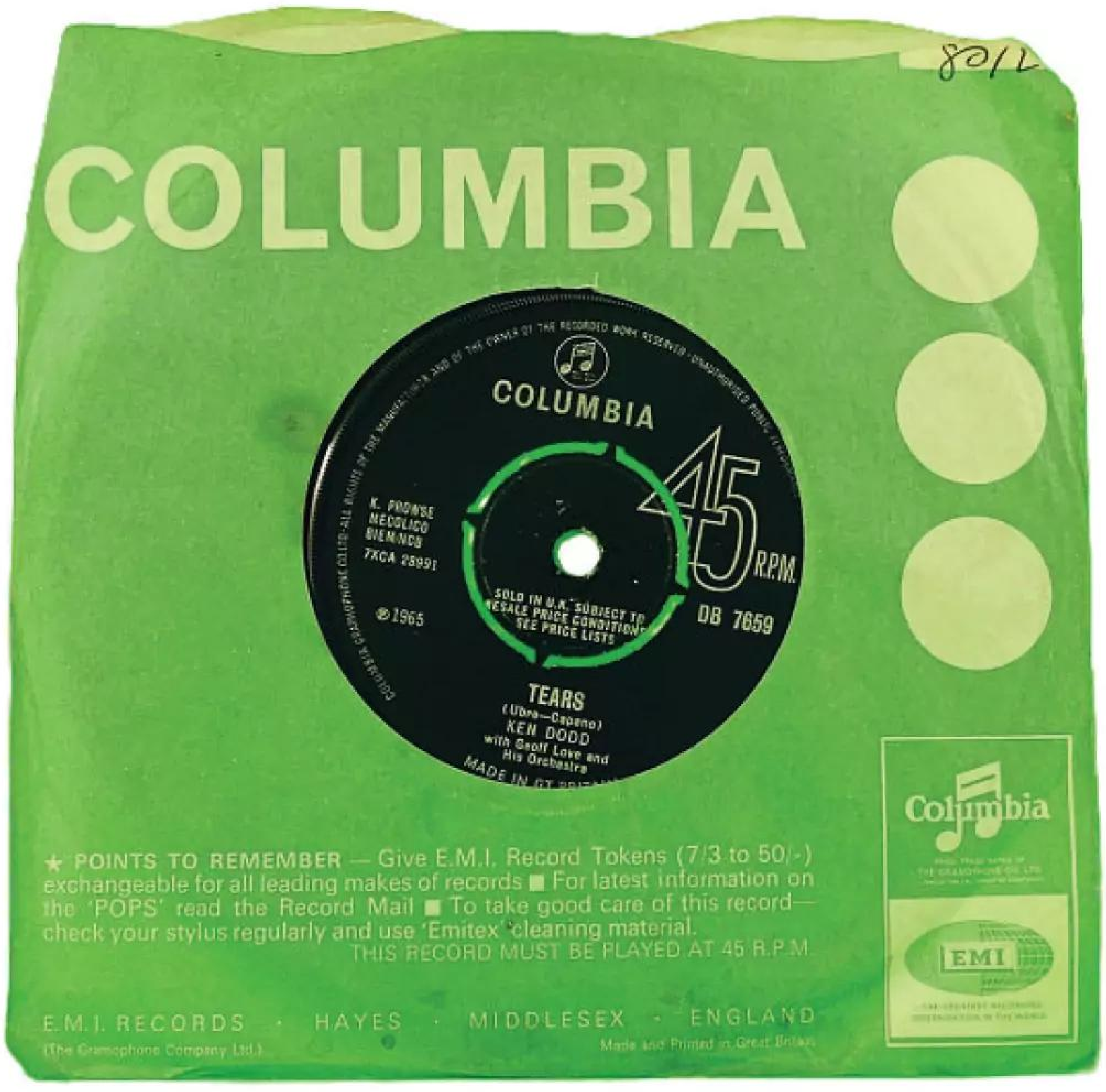
This phenomenon underscores the significant impact and dominance of Liverpool acts in the music industry during that era.

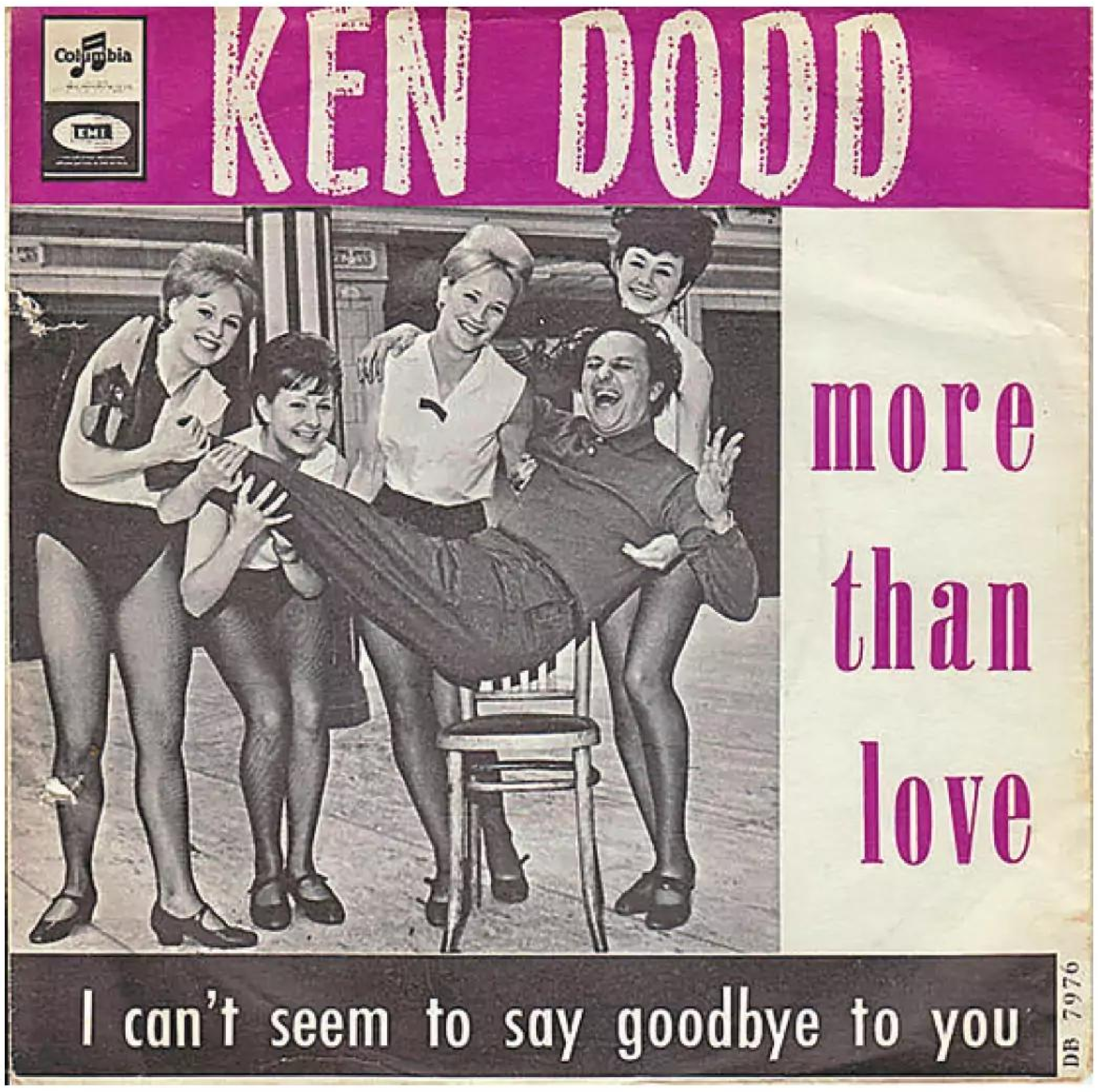
Ken's follow-up single to Tears was the River (Le Colline Sono in Fiore), which also achieved remarkable success on the charts, reaching No 3 and marking the conclusion of what had been an exceptionally fruitful 1965. In the year that followed, he continued to enjoy significant popularity, releasing three further hit singles. Promises peaked at No 6, More Than Love reached No 14, and It's Love managed to secure a spot in the top 40, albeit at No 36.

However, by 1967, it seemed that Ken's recording career was on the decline, as very few records were released during this period. Despite this, between 1967 and 1975, he managed to add another seven Top 40 hits to his repertoire. Even in the early 1980s, Ken remained active in the music scene, releasing two singles that, while not chart-toppers, still made their way into the lower tiers of the charts.

Additionally, he produced a Top 10 album titled 20 Golden Greats – The Best of Ken Dodd. With the end of a very successful recording career, Doddy continued to thrive in his primary passion: making people laugh. It is widely acknowledged that he excelled in this endeavour, leaving a lasting legacy in the world of entertainment.

DAI Y ECHO
STOP PRESS





Above: Gay Byrne looks on as the Beatles and Ken Dodd have a chat on a 1963 edition of Late Scene Extra. Between them, the two Liverpool acts would be responsible for the top five best selling singles of the 1960s. Left: Tears spent 24 weeks in the charts with five of them at No 1. Right: A particularly fruitful 1965 was followed by equally popular 1966 with the likes of More Than Love reaching No 14.

Sonic Boom Boy

Simon Stabler speaks to Boom Radio co-founder David Lloyd

There are several reasons why people decide to cash in their pensions. Many use the money to pay off their mortgage, while others use it for home improvements, a new car or a dream holiday. Nottingham-born broadcaster David Lloyd, however, is one of the few people to cash in his pension so that he could start a radio station.

"I was a lonely child, I was the last of a large family, an accidental fifth member. And my best friend was my radio," explains Boom Radio co-founder David.

"I was inordinately fascinated by these voices in a box. You'd listen on medium wave and twiddle up and down and hear the stations coming in from far-flung lands and on FM, or VHF as we used to call it in those days, I would listen to the police messages, just amazed how this radio thing worked.

"My first appearance on the radio was age six when the very new BBC local radio station came to our school to record us doing our party pieces. I did a little poem about the Great Fire of London on BBC local radio.

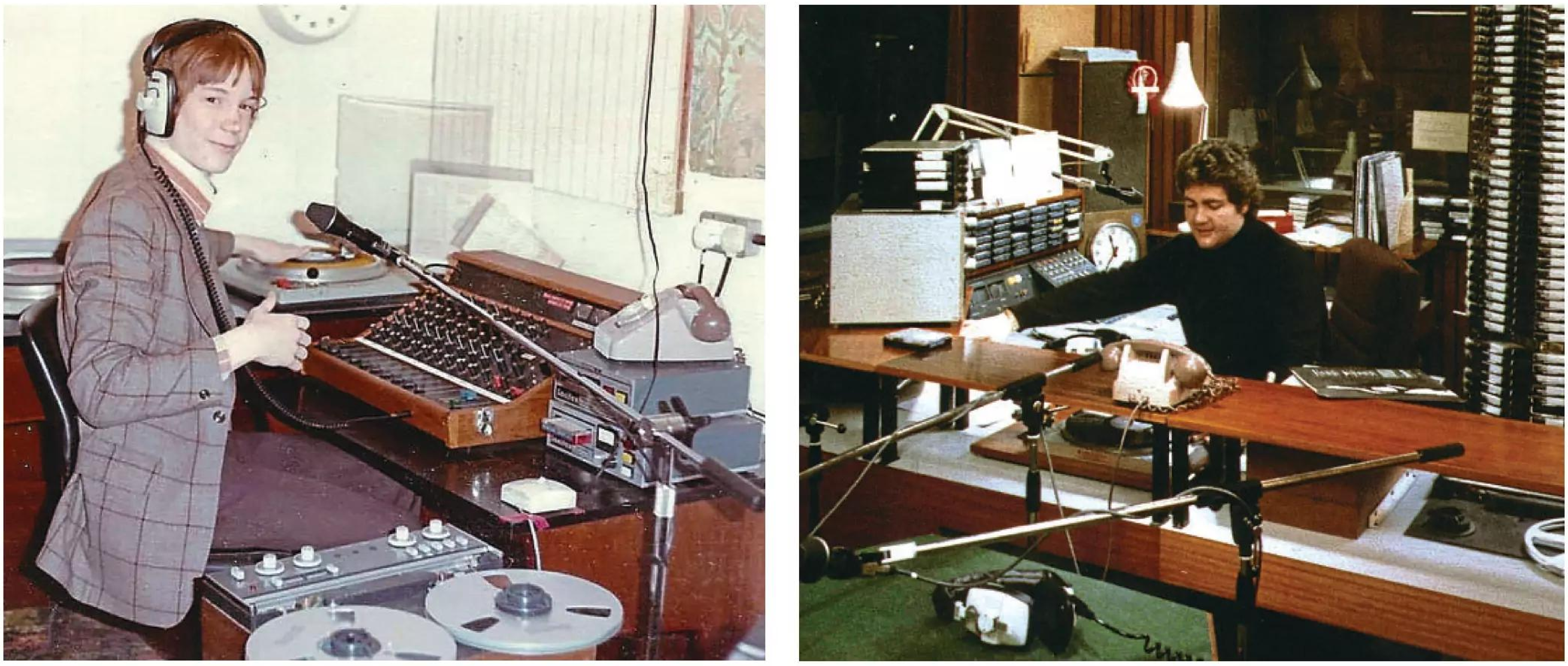
"I just loved it and wanted it to be my life. And in those days, there were very few radio stations. Wanting to be part of radio was about as unlikely as wanting a Hollywood career. It wasn't the thing that happened to normal lads in suburban households. So, it was a far-flung dream that I never thought I would actually achieve, but I really wanted to.

"I obviously grew a little older and got involved in hospital radio, one of the few places where you could go to hone your skills. So, I got involved with what was an excellent hospital radio station in Nottingham, where I learned from some brilliant people, just the rudimentary skills of the medium.

"Meanwhile, I was carrying on listening, and I'd listen avidly to as much radio as I could. BBC local radio, the new commercial stations – I had one open near me in Nottingham, Radio Trent. This was 1975, and just the excitement of hearing that very polished music radio station beaming in across my city on the most gorgeous summer days in 75 was wonderful and I just wanted to be part of that, that was my dream.

"I worked in a bank on leaving school, because I didn't go to university and I was still desperate to get into radio. So, I briefly worked in a bank, Lloyd's Bank, for seven very miserable months. Useful, I know what it's like to do a job just for doing a

Top: A professional broadcaster for 45 years, David Lloyd is Boom Radio's co-founder, programme director and morning show presenter.



Left: David, pictured in 1977, honed his radio skills as a volunteer with Nottingham Hospitals Radio. Right: One of David's first tasks at Radio Trent was writing horoscopes for breakfast show host Dale Winton, a big star in Nottingham long before his TV career.

job's sake, and that was the only time in my career I've done that. So, that was useful grounding as a broadcaster, knowing what real life is like.

"I was desperately trying to get into commercial radio. There were only 19 stations across the country in those days, so it was really difficult, really competitive. What you do, when you try to get a job on air at a radio station, is send off a recording of you doing a pretend show.

"So, I used to send them off, but so did everybody else. And I didn't get any joy. And then, I ended up doing a two-minute documentary about how difficult it was to get a job on a radio station, and sent this round, and this seemed to grab the imagination.

"And suddenly, I got lots of interviews, which was great, and I turned up for those. But one of those was my hometown, Radio Trent in Nottingham. And I started there exactly 45 years ago this week. I started my career at Radio Trent at the very bottom, doing fairly small but important tasks.

"I would do the travel news. I used to compile that. I would write the horoscopes for Dale Winton. He was at Radio Trent, hosting the morning show. He was a huge star in Nottingham, and he used to have the horoscopes that he'd read out beautifully every day. And, on occasion, the envelope from the psychic didn't arrive. And he would march up to the office and say: 'David, darling, I need some horoscopes.'

> **"Hearing that very polished music radio station was wonderful, and I just wanted to be part of that, that was my dream."**

"And I would have to sit there and look to The Sun newspaper for inspiration and write my own horoscopes for him to read out. So, I was doing all sorts of jobs like that before I was actually trusted on air.

"Talking to the people I knew in my hometown was just the most remarkable thing. And, in those days, with very few radio stations, if you were on a radio station at all, everybody knew you. I mean, those radio stations would reach probably more than half the population.

"You became known, and you were invited to open coffee mornings and galas. You became a star in a very small area of the United Kingdom, wonderful days.

"I've worked at a range of radio stations of all sorts of different formats, news and rock music and everything else. But I did spend two or three years as a media regulator, and that was an opportunity I was invited to take and couldn't turn down because it was at a critical time in the development of radio. And I thought I'll kick myself if I don't take the opportunity to do what I can and bring in, hopefully, an understanding of the industry and of the listeners to the regulators. So that was a fascinating insight. And I'm glad I did it.

"But I was also really delighted to return to the other side and be back on the radio again, playing music and having fun. I sort of drifted into management because I felt I'd like a shot at it and have managed lots of radio stations. The great thing about Boom is that we're a very small operation and I'm co-founder, programme director, and I'm doing the morning show again, which I absolutely adore."

Feeling that older listeners were being overlooked by the likes of BBC Radio 2, David suggested to a group of friends that they launch their own station to address that.

"We were all ex-radio colleagues, semi-retired at the time, but we all felt we still had the energies for another throw of the dice, one last venture. The essence of Boom Radio is a radio station that is unashamedly targeted at older listeners, and I feel, as somebody in their 60s, that a lot of media doesn't seem to be aimed at me, doesn't seem to talk in my language, and I feel excluded by it.

"We did all the research and that's exactly how our audience felt. People come to us and say: 'I feel as if I've come home.' It's radio that sounds familiar because we're playing loads of records from the great days of the 60s and the 70s, those two decades are particularly key to what

Called on to open events including coffee mornings and galas, David enjoyed hosting roadshows for Radio Trent.

we do at Boom and music like that and the presenters who present in, not an old fashioned way, but the sort of way radio sounded like as we were growing up.

“We are really pleased with what we’ve created. The audience is way ahead of our early estimates. We’re doing something like three quarters of a million listeners a week, and that projects up to about a million over the course of a month. And for a new radio station that’s just arrived, broadcasting from people’s back bedrooms, that is utterly incredible. The other incredible thing is how loyal our listeners are. The time they spend with us each week is the longest of all UK music radio.

“We get hundreds and hundreds of emails from people saying what a difference we have made to their lives. We get people saying: ‘I’ve lost my husband, but you’re a friend in the room and I feel as though you’re talking to me.’ I’ve always loved radio, I love the connection, but this is the closest connection I’ve ever experienced between a radio station and its audience.”

Although Boom Radio has a slightly more traditional sound to other radio stations, it owes its very existence to modern technology.

“Technology has utterly revolutionised the audio world,” says David. “Editing used to be on tape with a razor blade, and that’s where I learned my skill. And it’s a very good way of learning your skill.

“And I think the biggest change has been transmission in that we now have DAB (Digital Audio Broadcasting) and, of course, online smart speakers. FM is a lovely thing but the United Kingdom is congested, and you can’t reuse the frequencies next to each other. But the advent of DAB has made it possible to have far more radio stations now than we used to be able to have.

“Because of the technology, we don’t need any premises anymore. And that immediately makes it a lot more cost efficient to produce. So, our broadcasters broadcast from their own homes.

“Bearing in mind the average age of our presenters is just over 70, quite a lot of these presenters probably didn’t want a job where they’d have to trek all the way into London to host a programme every day, but they’re more than happy to go up to the back bedroom and broadcast from their own home, which means that not only didn’t we have to fund the premises, it also made it very easy to secure some really top names to be on the radio station. And again, that’s only because of the technology. So, we were able to bring that together and deliver what we think is a lovely warm radio station.

“We have a great range of presenters on air. Some names that are very well known, and the sort of presenters that our audience have grown up with and really wanted to hear again. People like David Hamilton and Simon Bates and, in our early days, Kid Jensen etc.

“These people we’re now working with, day in, day out, we have to sometimes blink during the realisation of the calibre of names, both on the regular roster and some of the names we get for the specials. We’ve had Sir Tim Rice doing a special, and Esther Rantzen did an excellent series for us in the early days of Boom. I remember putting that show together with Esther, just thinking: ‘I wish I could tell my mother about this.’

“Although we play some older and some more recent and newer stuff, the thrust of Boom Radio is 60s and 70s oldies. We’ve had quite a few older Boom Radio listeners who said they’d like a little bit more 50s. And the difficulty for us is that if we put more 50s on to Boom Radio, we have to play fewer 60s and 70s.

“So, we set up another radio station, Boom Light, where we could really focus and play more 50s easy listing. We find it attracts a slightly older listener, but also it’s a nice mood listener. If you want something really relaxing, dip into our Boom Light station.

“There are also some tracks which are maybe too rocky, too loud and might just frighten the horses a little bit on Boom Radio. But they are much loved by a significant contingent of listeners. So, Boom Rock allows us to explore that rock repertoire, and we do frequently consider which other Boom spin-offs we might launch in the future.

“I think we reminded the BBC of the importance of serving the huge numbers of radio listeners who are aged over 55. They certainly distanced themselves from older listeners and we have detected various things that Radio 2 has done which we think it wouldn’t have done had we not been here.

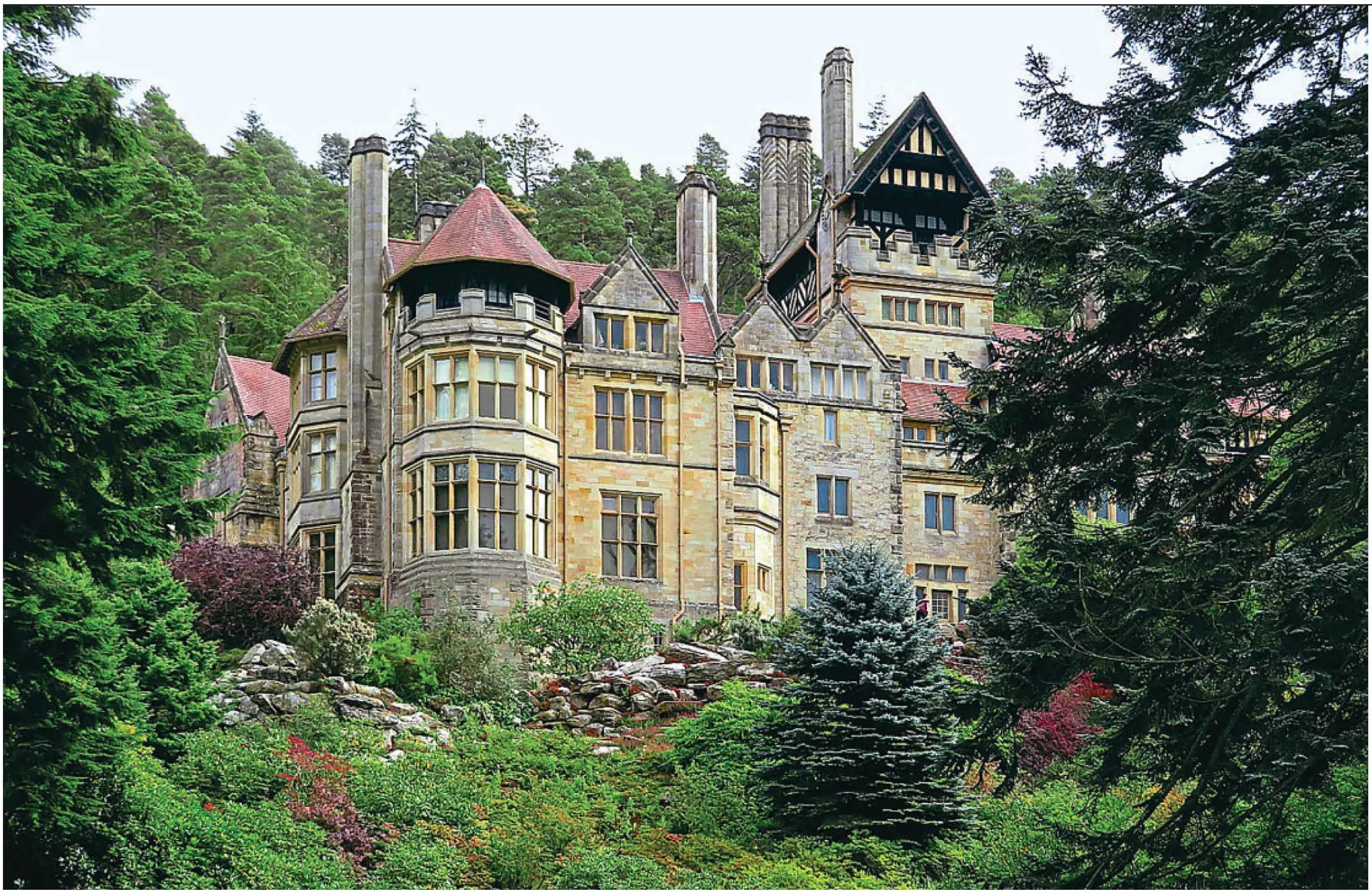
“When we get together, because obviously we talk to each other all the time but we don’t see each other, we hire a place in London and we go there for drinks and a chat and have a lovely night. And the energy in the room is just remarkable. You look around, you see these wonderful broadcasters from various generations of radio and the mood in the room is just amazing. The great thing is that people have got nothing to prove now on Boom, all our broadcasters are doing it because they really are having a ball, and they’ll continue to have a ball. I think I’m not alone in thinking I’d like to be still on the air the day I die.”

Hear Boom Radio across most of the UK on a DAB+ radio. To listen on smart speakers like Alexa or Google, say: “Alexa, play Boom Radio,” or “OK, Google, play Boom Radio.” For Boom Light or Boom Rock, just call their names instead.

We're here
because you were there

BOOMradio

DAB+ and 'Alexa, play Boom Radio'



The Modern Magician

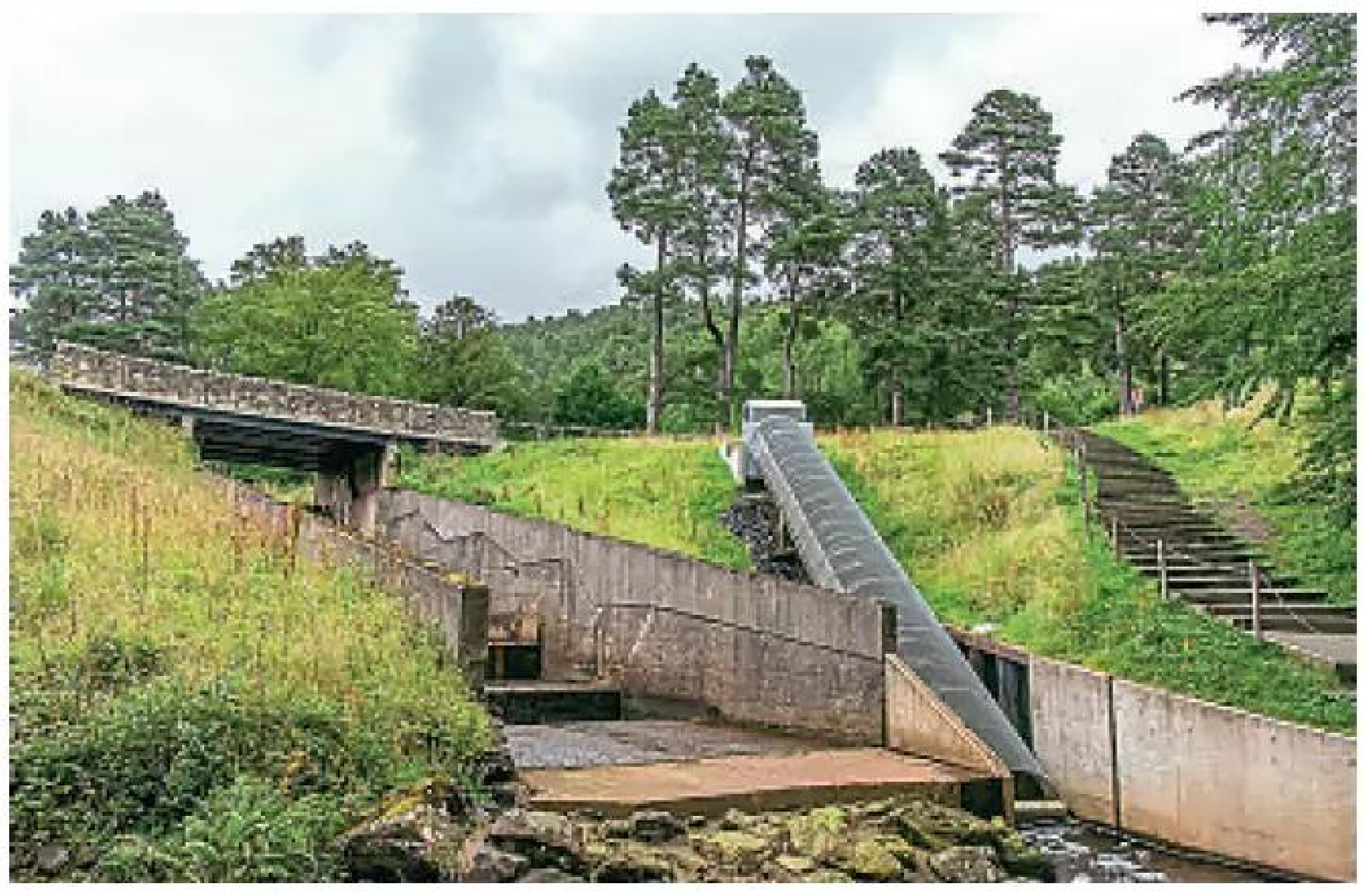
Ann Thompson tells the story of industrialist William Armstrong, the man behind the first house in the world to have all mod cons

The country home of Lord Armstrong, Cragside, was the first house in the world to use hydro-electric power. In addition to electric light, it boasted a hydraulically powered dishwasher and dumb waiter. Little wonder that Armstrong was known as "the modern magician" in Victorian times. William George Armstrong was born on 26 November 1810 in Newcastle upon Tyne to William, a corn merchant, and his wife, Anne. As a child, the young William experimented with weights and pulleys, and while at Bishop Auckland Grammar School, he broke a window trying out a crossbow he had designed himself. During his time at school, he was fascinated by regular trips to William Ramshaw's engineering works.

Armstrong was sometimes troubled by bronchitis and consequently was sent to Rothbury, Northumberland to benefit from the country air at the holiday home of his father's friend, Armorer Donkin, who was a solicitor. The boy grew to love the area, and it was no coincidence that in later years he chose to make his own summer home there.

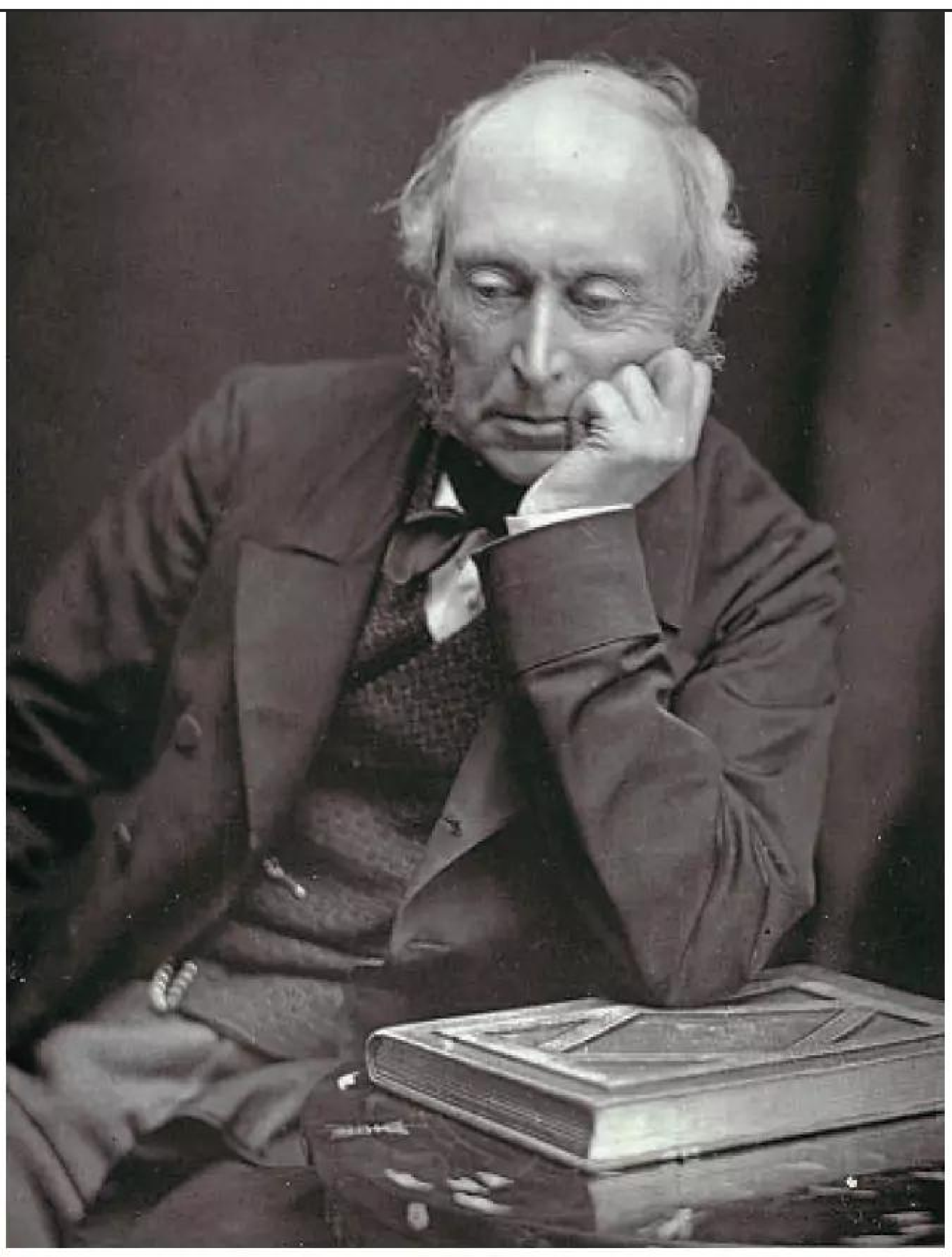
After leaving school, William went to London to train as a lawyer under the watchful eye of his sister's husband, William Henry Watson. After qualifying, he moved back to Newcastle in 1833 and started work at Donkin's practice. Two years later, he married William Ramshaw's daughter, Margaret. He and his bride moved into a new house in Jesmond, a suburb of Newcastle, where Margaret developed a passion for gardening. Although their house no longer exists, the gardens were given to the people of Newcastle in the form of Jesmond Dene.

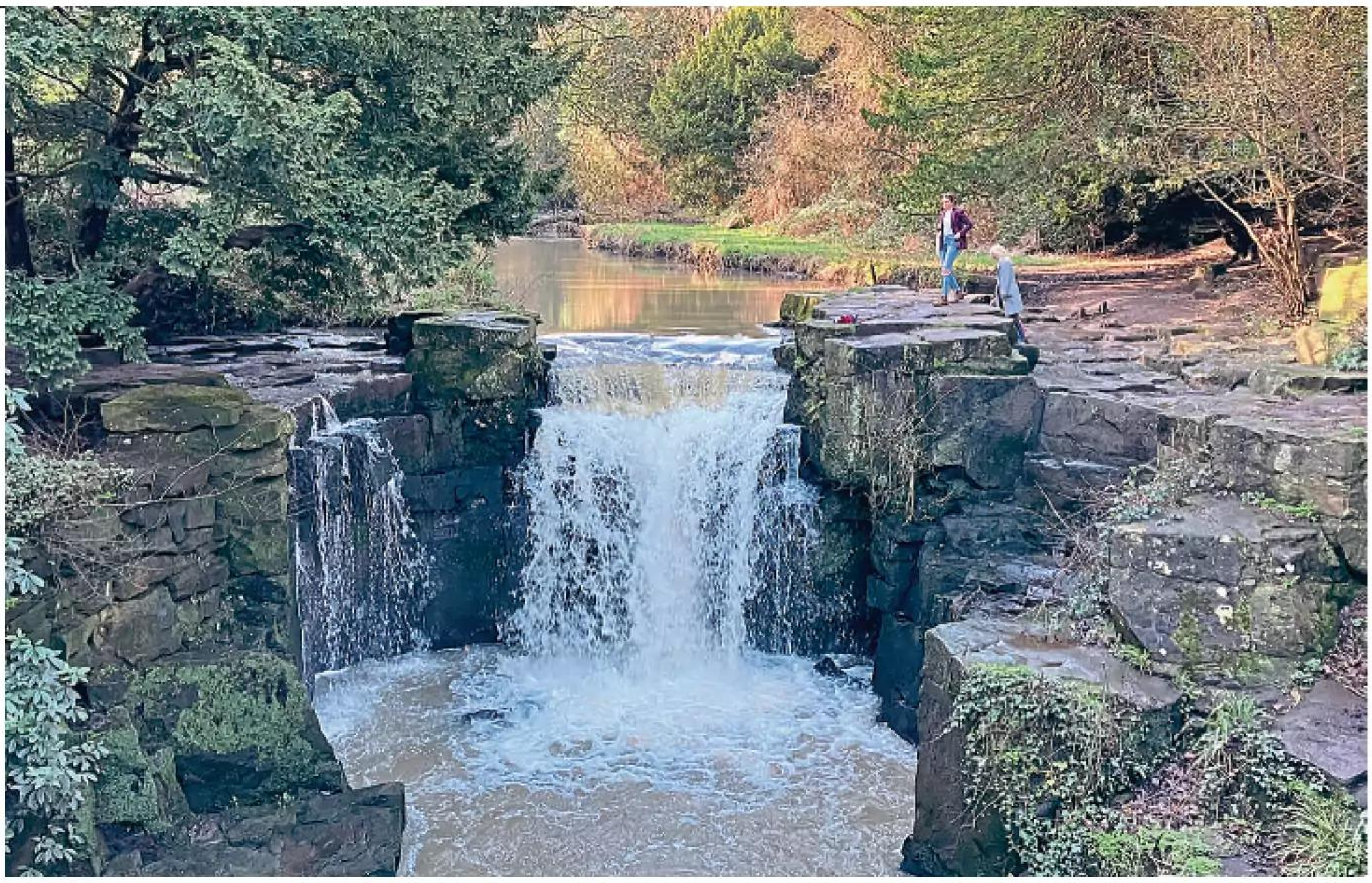
In 1845, William attempted his first business scheme, the Whittle Dene



Top: In 1863, William Armstrong bought Cragside, a hunting lodge near Rothbury, as a country retreat. From 1869 onwards, it was extended into the rambling structure which still stands. Left: In 2014, the National Trust installed an Archimedes Screw turbine at Cragside.

Photographs: (Cragside) Creative Commons/Snapshooter46, (Archimedes Screw) Creative Commons/Ian Capper, (Generators) Creative Commons/Chris Allen, (Waterfall) Creative Commons/Anthony Foster





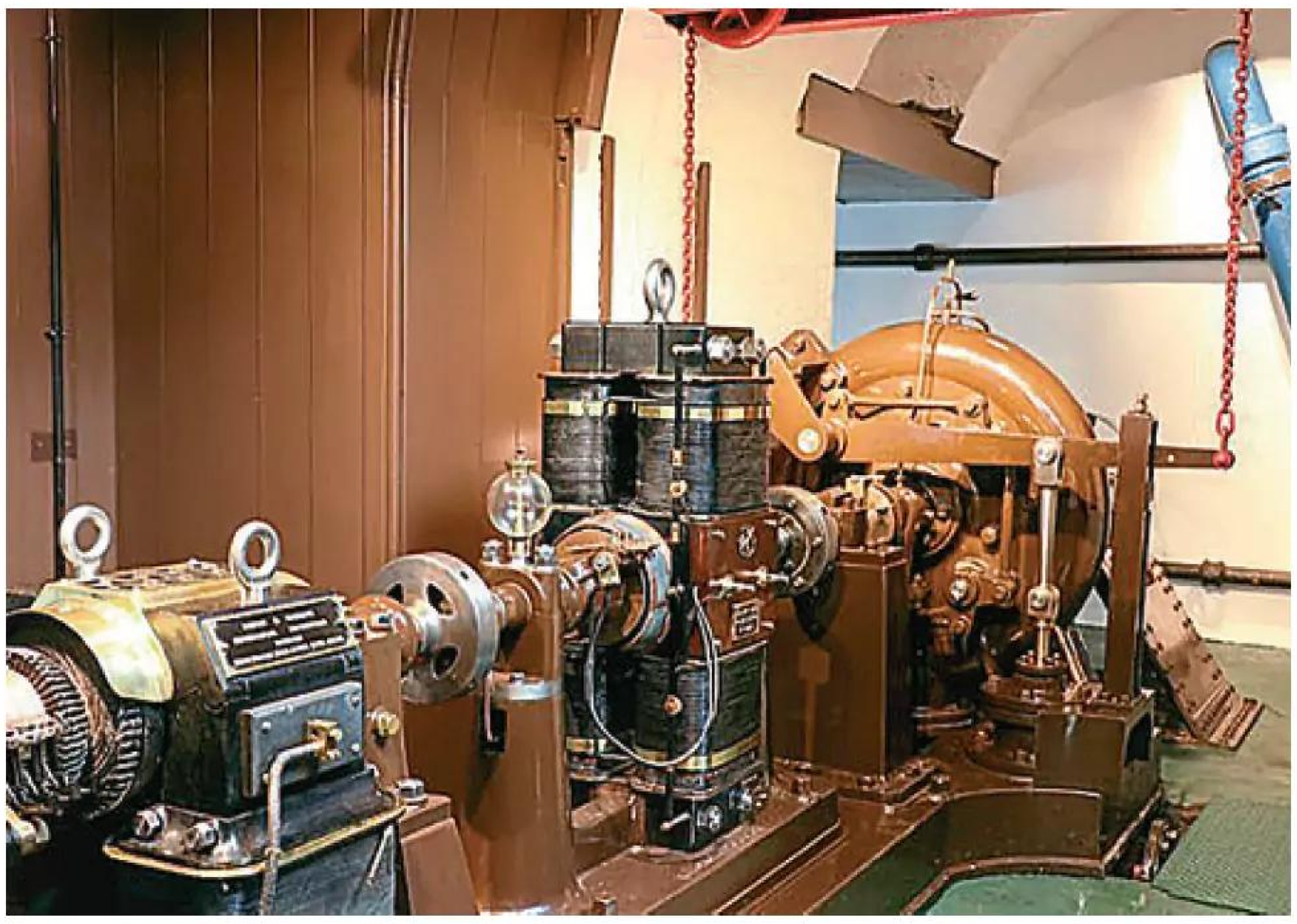
Left: Although trained as a lawyer, William Armstrong would set up the engineering firm that would later become part of Vickers-Armstrongs. Right: Now a public park, Jesmond Dene and its waterfall was created by Armstrong in land around the valley near his now demolished home. Below: The first generators were installed at Cragside in the 1830s with further equipment added 60 years later.

Water Company. Water was piped from a reservoir on the outskirts of Newcastle to fountains dotted around the town via a system of lead pipes. Wealthy residents paid for the water to be pumped into their houses. At a time when sewerage was extremely basic and outbreaks of cholera, dysentery, and typhoid were common, such an innovation was welcomed on health grounds.

While on holiday, Armstrong had noticed a waterwheel being used to give power to a quarry/marble works. Realising most of the waterpower was being wasted, he made plans for a hydraulically driven engine, which was then constructed at William Ramshaw's works. Unfortunately, there was little interest in his invention, but he persevered and later designed a piston engine to drive a hydraulic crane. The new crane was then installed on the quayside of the River Tyne, with such success that, in 1847, Armstrong abandoned his work as a lawyer and bought some land nearby for his new engineering firm, WG Armstrong and Co. He provided a school for his workers' children, as well as a mechanics' institute and library, in the philanthropic spirit of the time.

The Crimean War of the mid-1850s created a demand for armaments and the factory started producing guns, for which it became famous. Armstrong's company also built Newcastle's Swing Bridge, one of the first in the world of its size, in 1876. It gave ships access further up the river so a shipyard could be built. The Elswick works included 10 acres of steelworks and a railway. Armstrong also designed the hydraulic machinery to raise and lower London's Tower Bridge in 1894.

During the 1850s, Armstrong bought up land around a valley near his home in Jesmond. He turned it into a park, planting a wide variety of shrubs and putting in paths connected by bridges. One of the more spectacular features to be created was a waterfall above the old mill. Although the land, to become known as Jesmond Dene, was for the private use of the Armstrongs, the public were allowed to visit twice a week. The money raised by charging a small entrance fee was donated to the local hospital. The valley was used occasionally to test the guns made in the factory.



In 1863, Armstrong bought Cragside, a hunting lodge near Rothbury, as a country retreat. The house came with 20 acres of pine woods, small lakes and rocky outcrops. From 1869 onwards, the architect Norman Shaw extended the existing, relatively modest, house into the rambling structure which still stands. All the building work was done by local stonemasons, closely supervised by Armstrong himself.

Water from the lakes and streams on the estate was used to make electricity for an arc lamp in the house. New incandescent filament lightbulbs designed by Armstrong's friend, Joseph Swan, were installed later. In the library, electric lamps in globes were placed on top of vases, which contained the necessary wiring. A clever design enabled the light to be turned on or off simply by lifting the globe up or replacing it.

In 2014, the National Trust installed an Archimedes Screw, Cragside's modern water turbine. Water from Tumbleton lake flows through this 17m-long galvanised steel tube, pushing the fins around. This energy is converted into power which generates enough electricity to light all 350 lights in the house.

A hydraulically powered spit was used for roasting meat in the kitchen and a hydraulic dumb waiter linked the kitchen to the lower-level scullery. There were also fire alarms and a hydraulic passenger lift. These inventions of Armstrong's helped to make the servants' workload much easier. In addition, the house boasted running hot and cold water, and an internal telephone system.

William Armstrong's fondness for hydraulically powered gadgets extended to his gardens. In the greenhouses, huge pots containing exotic fruits stood on turntables, under which were rollers. These were turned by water pumped from the lakes higher up the hill, enabling the trees and plants to enjoy much more sunlight.

Cragside had a central heating system, where warmed air came through floor and skirting board vents. A huge marble chimney breast in the drawing room is decorative rather than functional and was probably installed to impress the Prince and Princess of Wales (the future King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra), who stayed at Cragside in the summer of 1884. The fireplace's flue does not go up vertically, as would be expected, because the room is built into a rock face. Instead, it joins flues from other rooms in taking a tortuous route to one side of the house.

William Armstrong was made 1st Baron Armstrong of Cragside in 1887, the year of Queen Victoria's golden jubilee. By this time, he had made Cragside his main residence and was spending less time in Newcastle. When Lady Armstrong died in 1893, her husband embarked on another project rather than allowing himself to be consumed by grief after such a long and happy marriage. The next year he bought Bamburgh Castle and set about restoring it. The workers were housed a short distance away in Armstrong Cottages, built specifically for the purpose. While the work at Bamburgh was going on, Lord Armstrong built 12 almshouses in Rothbury in memory of his mother, to accommodate retired workers from his estate. The plan was to convert Bamburgh Castle into a gentleman's convalescent home, but Lord Armstrong died, in 1900, before it came to fruition.

Lord and Lady Armstrong never had children, but the descendants of William Armstrong's sister inherited the castle and still live in it today. Part of it is open to the public as is much of Cragside, which is now owned by the National Trust. In both buildings, displays about Lord Armstrong's life can be seen along with many of his inventions.

Cragside, Rothbury, Morpeth, Northumberland NE65 7PX (01669 620333, nationaltrust.org.uk/cragside)

THE CHARITY THAT BEGAN WITH HOMES

William Sutton's legacy founded The Sutton Trust. **David E Norris** recounts its groundbreaking work

There are some people who are born mavericks. Others like to throw a hand grenade into the system, stand back and see what happens. When it comes to what we now call "a housing crisis", William Sutton's strategy could count as a combination of both.

Born in 1833 and receiving only a limited formal education, Sutton developed what would now be called a logistics company, distributing bundles of parcels in London via rail (when railways were obliged to carry all goods offered) and then having an agent distribute them locally.

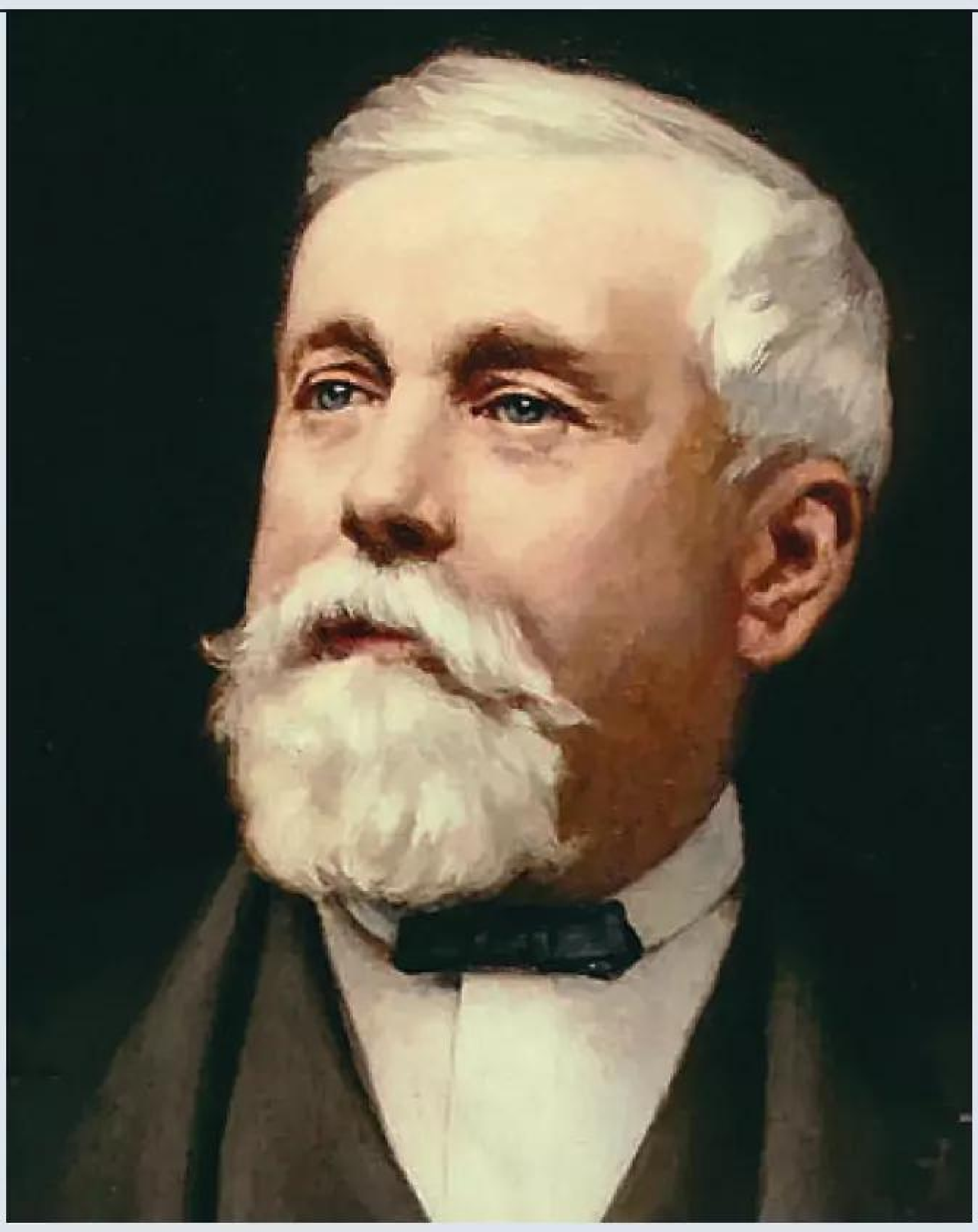
He later expanded into brewing, distilling and bottling, channelling these goods into his shops, inns, hotels and warehouses. In later life, he invested in railways and docks. All of this made him a self-made millionaire but, on his death in 1900, his will caused consternation. Although he had no children of his own, his second wife, brother and close family relatives only received quite small inheritances. The rest was succinctly stated in just two short lines.

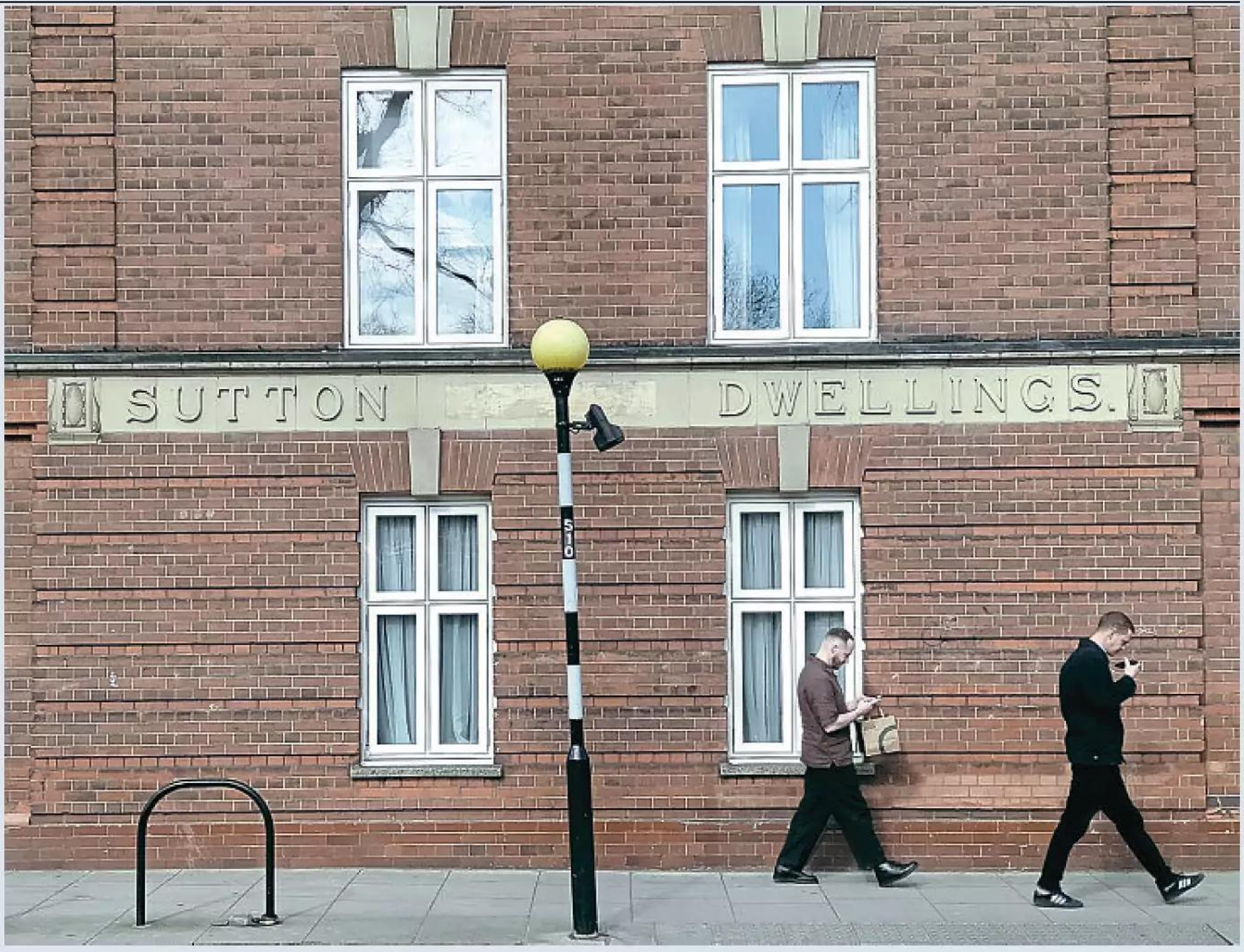
"Set up a trust to provide proper and sufficient dwelling houses for the poor and provide good housing at rents they can afford."

For a man who had never shown any interest in charitable works or public activities, had no religious affiliation and was never a patron of the arts, this was a complete bolt from the blue.

His family naturally contested it, as well

Top: Sutton Estates bought 4.5 acres of land in Chelsea in 1908, creating 674 dwellings, split between 16 blocks, and home to 2,200 people.




SUTTON DWELLINGS.

Above: A self-made millionaire, William Sutton founded the UK's first door-to-door long-distance parcel service. Right: Sutton Trust estates, such as Sutton Dwellings in Chelsea, used superior materials and high-quality bricks. The construction was meticulous and the pointing perfect.

they might, because although their share came to £30,000, his fortune amounted to £1.5m. The legal wrangling dragged on, and it was not until 1930 that The Sutton Trust was free to manage its own affairs.

In the meantime, it managed to build four housing estates in London: Bethnal Green (160 flats), Finsbury (284 flats), Rotherhithe (194 flats) and Chelsea (674 flats), with smaller projects in Birmingham and Newcastle. With assets 10 times greater than any other housing charity, The Sutton Trust adopted a business model that was refreshingly simple with just a hint of ostentation.

All the flats had a scullery/kitchen, a bathroom and an individual toilet and hot water. It was also realised that tenants with little disposable income after spending everything on shopping and travel needed other accessories in their flat, so fitted blinds, fitted draining boards, drying facilities, fitted bedroom and kitchen storage came as "standard items". Also, the heating costs were kept down by having coal bought in bulk by the trust for resale at cost price.

The management structure consisted of each estate having a superintendent responsible for lighting all the gas lamps (especially in the stairwells), general maintenance and decoration within the flats, cleaning the drains and windows, as well as collecting the weekly rent – which included allocating rent rebates when circumstances merited them.

Such a system meant the estates were regulated on a personal level even though it could be dictated when children should be indoors, when washing should be removed and, most crucially, when each flat was to be given its annual inspection by the superintendent himself.

Harsh? Maybe, but the trade-off was there was no graffiti on the walls, and bicycle and pram sheds were well maintained in an area not patrolled by police. Architecturally, the tenants had what they craved most: namely privacy in the form of a front door they could call their own and a pride in the aesthetic qualities of the estates. Sutton Trust estates always used superior materials and high-quality bricks. Facades may have been ornate and decorative with their Corinthian columns, stone wreathes and swags, but the construction was always meticulous and the pointing perfect.

By 1940, The Sutton Trust had expanded far beyond London, still clinging to the same mantra of charging rents that would give a nominal 2.5% return on its capital despite owning 7,816 dwellings. However, circumstances change, laws change and events over time necessitate changes. At first there were petty legal challenges, such as who exactly were the so-called poor. Did that include the destitute who could not pay any rent? In Chelsea, residents simply didn't want poor people in their nice neighbourhood.

After World War One, the conviction grew that housing should become a state responsibility and not be left to charitable enterprises, especially as land prices had risen, building costs had rocketed and subsidies were necessary for some building projects. It is easy to see how the tide of social change enveloping Britain began to make the nature of charitable housing trusts create a fog with regards to its real purpose.

Between 1914 and 1936, average semi-skilled manual wages rose by 30%. Added to that, rent controls were first introduced in 1919 and increased in 1923. Slum clearance became a priority in the 1930s and at the same time owner-occupation became a tangible aspiration making council housing and private house building the new battleground.

Successive housing acts offered subsidies for house building using slogans such as the need to build "homes for heroes". The creation of the welfare state and the emergence of housing associations tasked with providing rented accommodation together with the introduction of fair rent legislation meant that Sutton Trust rents were no longer low in comparison to others.

After 1945, it became almost impossible to run a charity such as The Sutton Trust as it had originally been constituted. Charities were receiving tax breaks so they could tackle the social issues local authorities were increasingly burdened with.

Incredibly, The Sutton Trust, now called Clarion Housing Group (the largest housing association in the UK), is still in existence and still tries to pursue its original aim but the waters are muddier than they were in 1900 when William Sutton had the bright idea of throwing a lot of money at the problem of being hard up.

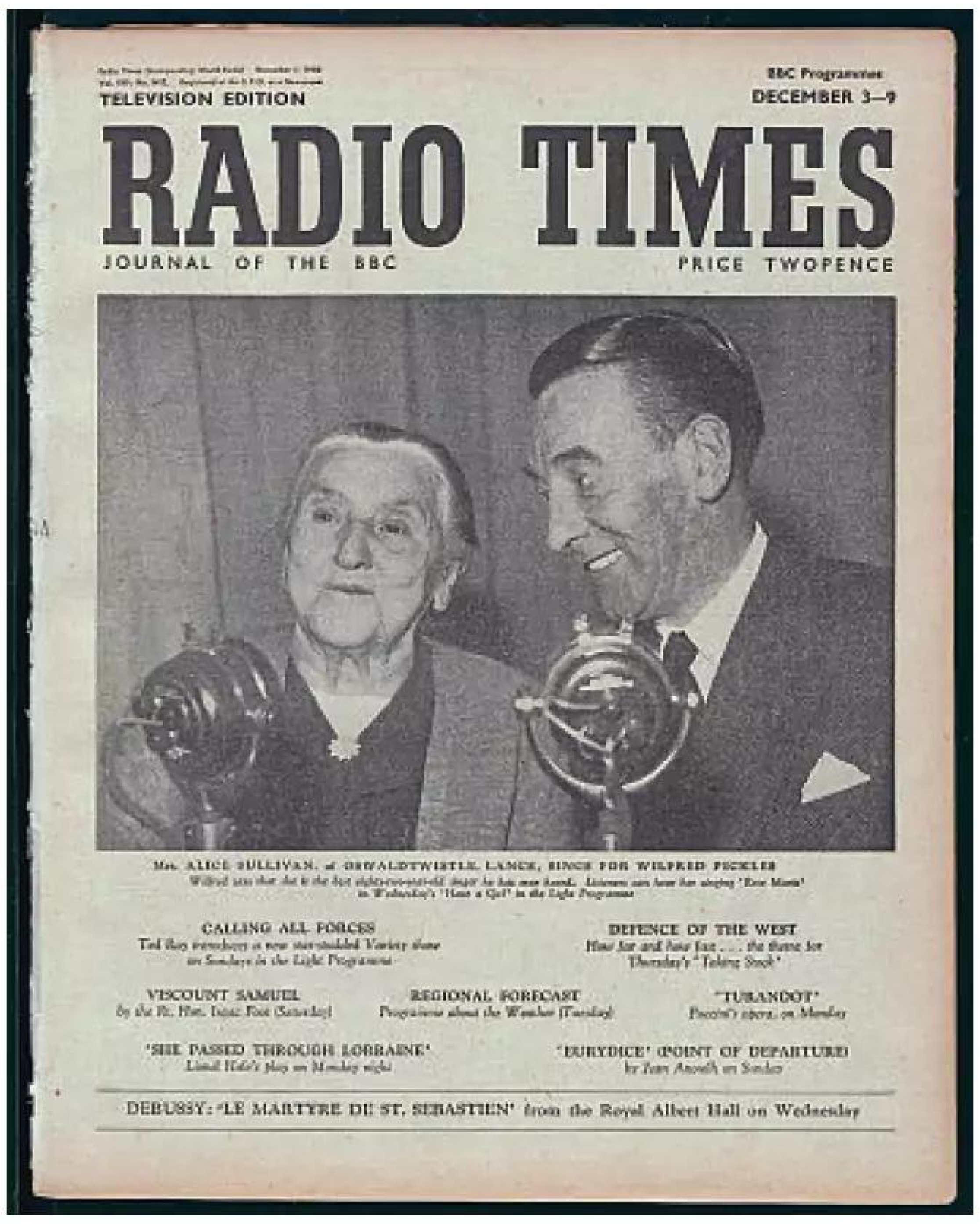
‘Ow Do, ‘Ow Are Yer?

Derek Lamb remembers Wilfred Pickles, professional Yorkshireman and celebrity of the 1940s and 50s

To improve their appeal, many performers adopt a stage name. A notable exception was Wilfred Pickles. Despite having a name better suited to a slapstick comedian, he achieved a remarkable level of popularity, especially through his radio programme Have a Go, as well as stage, film and television appearances. Born in Halifax, West Yorkshire and a builder by trade, he was acting professionally in the 1930s and became an announcer on the BBC’s northern region. National recognition came when he read the news on the BBC Home Service in 1941.

Until then, newsreaders and continuity announcers were anonymous and spoke in “received English”. Anticipating invasion, the BBC allowed them to give their names. Fearing an enemy agent could still manage a convincing impersonation, Wilfred Pickles was permitted to read in his broad Yorkshire accent, even wishing listeners “good neet”. Although some were less inclined to believe the news when he was reading, Wilfred Pickles became a regular voice on wartime radio.

He began touring the country, meeting ordinary people with the programme Billy Welcome, described in the Radio Times as “the lad from Halifax on the road again”. His “everyman” image led to a leading role in Ex-Corporal Wilf, a series where he played a demobbed soldier, readjusting to civilian life. In the spring of 1946, Have a Go began its 21-year run. Widely acknowledged as the most popular quiz show ever, it quickly attracted an audience of 20 million.



TELEVISION EDITION

BBC Programmes
DECEMBER 3–9

RADIO TIMES

JOURNAL OF THE BBC

PRICE TWOPENCE

MRS. ALICE SULLIVAN, of OSWALDTWISTLE, LANCS, SINGS FOR WILFRED PICKLES

CALLING ALL FORCES

DEFENCE OF THE WEST

VISCOUNT SAMUEL

REGIONAL FORECAST

‘TURANDOT’
Puccini’s opera, on Monday

‘SHE PASSED THROUGH LORRAINE’

‘EURYDICE’ (POINT OF DEPARTURE)

DEBUSSY: ‘LE MARTYRE DE ST. SEBASTIEN’ from the Royal Albert Hall on Wednesday

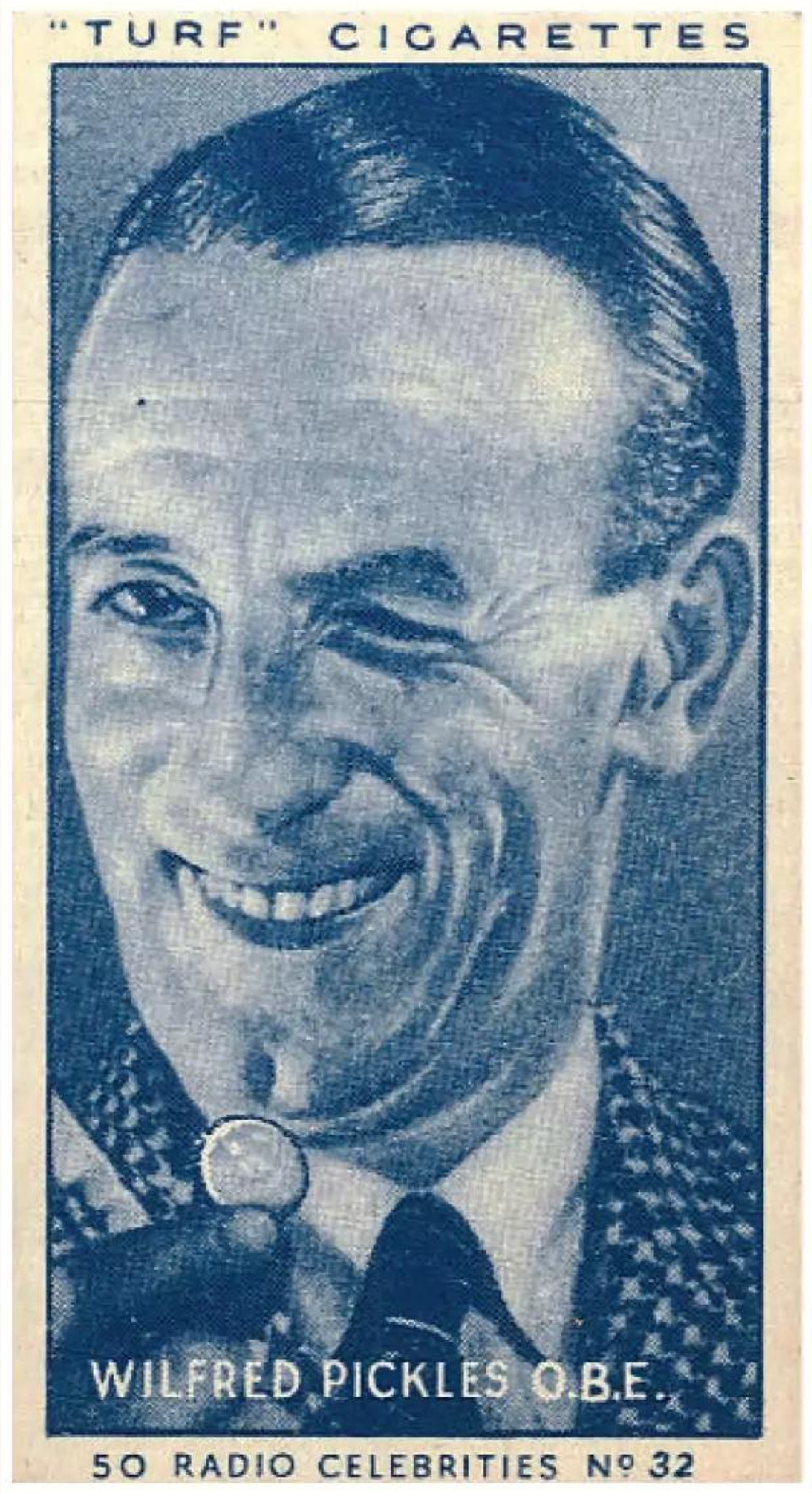
Top: Wilfred Pickles became one of the first broadcasters to read the news in a regional accent. Below: Wilfred Pickles asking: “Are yer courtin’?” was all the more entertaining when posed to a rather deaf 80-year-old.

In fact, it was barely a quiz show at all. The prize money was token, and the correct answers seldom mattered. Have a Go was an opportunity for ordinary people to tell engaging positive stories about their lives and experiences. Wilfred Pickles was the ideal host, expertly relaxing the contestant and delighting the audience with questions that included: “What was your most embarrassing moment, loov?” Another, “Are yer courtin’?”, was all the more entertaining when posed to a rather deaf 80-year-old. In a film clip from about 1950, he is shown skilfully juggling the needs of the contestant, the studio audience and the listeners at home. Seated at the piano, enjoying a cigarette, is Violet Carson, later to be famous as Coronation Street’s Ena Sharples.

Every edition followed the same format. The audience would sing along to the signature tune Have a Go Joe, Come and Have a Go and Wilfred would begin by saying: “People of Bridlington [or

Photographs: (Portrait) National Portrait Gallery London, (Public Eye) Fremantle Media/Shutterstock

Pictured with Alfred Burke and Ray Brooks in an episode of Public Eye.



Praise for Pickles

1950 Awarded the OBE for services to broadcasting.
1953 Castaway on Desert Island Discs (luxury item was his yellow waistcoat).
1971 Subject of This Is Your Life.

In Halifax, the Jubilee pub was previously known as the Portman & Pickles, commemorating Wilfred and locally born actor Eric Portman.

wherever the show was coming from], 'ow do, 'ow are yer?" Each contestant faced four questions, worth 2*s* 6*d*, 5*s*, 10*s*, and one guinea, making the top prize 38*s* 6*d*. There was also a jackpot, usually a similar sum and often an item of local produce. Much was broadcast live and without any genuinely embarrassing moments. His wife, Mabel, also featured in the programme and progress was punctuated by familiar catchphrases, including "How much on the table, Mabel?' and "Give 'em the money, Barney."

His radio work became a foundation for stage and pantomime and, later, films and television. He was a regular in the children's comic Radio Fun and narrated Peter and the Wolf, issued on a set of 78rpm records. There were box games of Have a Go and Ask Pickles as well as books. He even topped the variety bill with a stage version of Have a Go. Aspiring contestants were invited to present themselves at the stage door 30 minutes before curtain up. His stage play The Gay Dog was filmed with Megs Jenkins and Petula Clark. He employed three typists to deal with his fan mail and explained that, if people had taken the time to write to him, they deserved a reply.

With the growing popularity of television, he successfully appeared in several series of Ask Pickles from 1954. Like Have a Go, it focused on "human interest" by giving viewers the opportunity to make a wish come true. The wishes were modest and included a woman who wanted to stroke a tiger. Anticipating a cub, she was surprised when a 10-month-old half-grown example was led into the studio. It promptly snapped at the studio manager and then tore the sleeve on her dress. Other "asks" were more personal and prompted tearful reunions. Critics considered this was overly intrusive and, despite enormous popularity, Ask Pickles was cancelled in 1956. There is some suggestion that the BBC was determined to "refresh" its schedules to regain audiences lost to commercial television, which began in 1955.

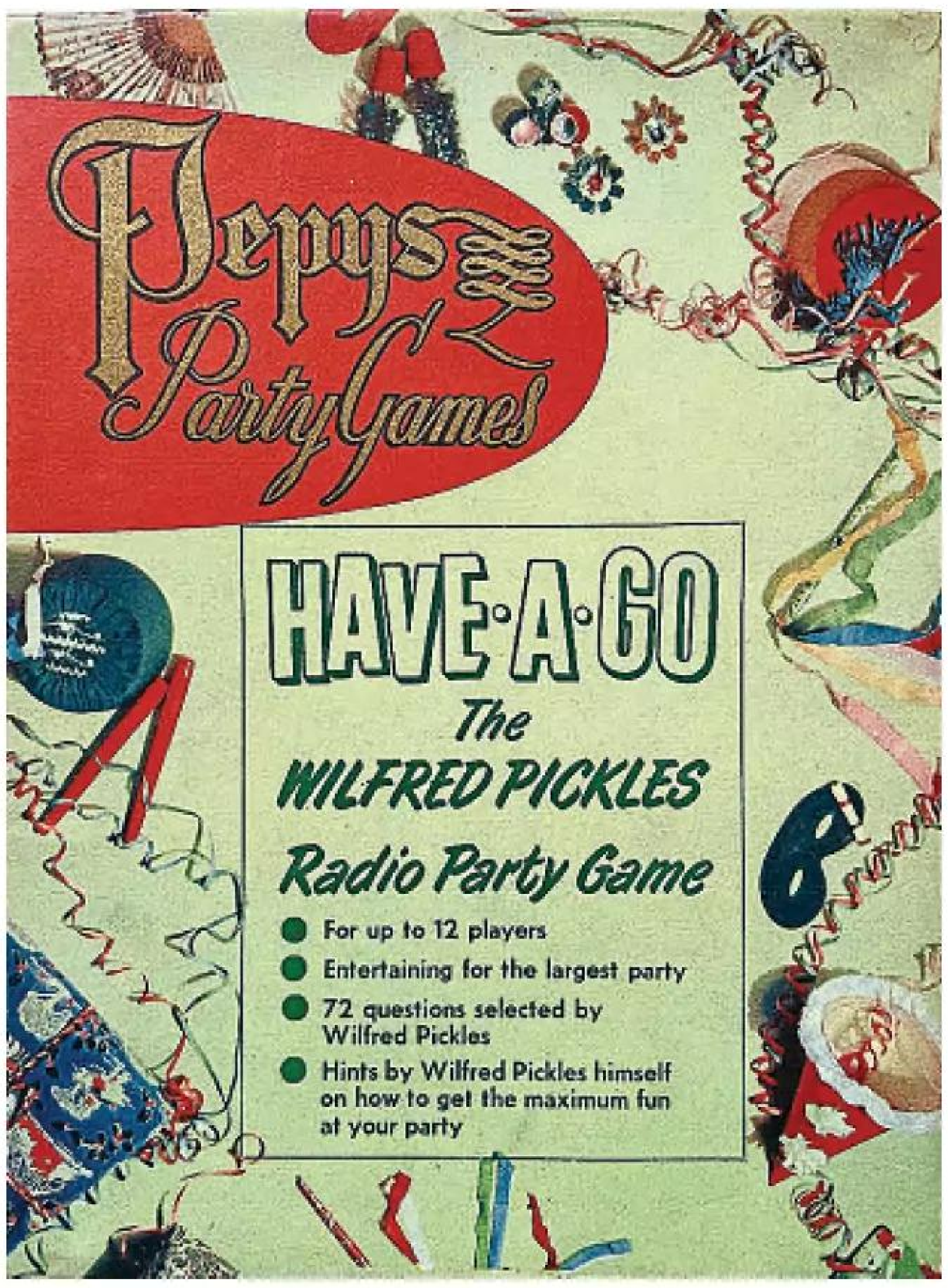
However, Where Are You Now?, a radio series devoted to reunions, was broadcast in 1958. Wilfred offered to help those who had lost touch with old friends, neighbours and workmates by enabling them to tell their story and "playing a record". Meanwhile, Have a Go continued, only coming to the end of its run in 1967. By then, with the swinging 60s at their peak, the format was becoming rather dated and tired. However, a one-off edition was broadcast in 1972, the year of the BBC's 50th anniversary.

Character parts in television and film kept Wilfred in the public eye. He played the father of Tom Courtenay's titular character in the film Billy Liar (1963) and Hayley Mills' understanding Uncle Fred in The Family Way (1966). His television career had a late flourish in 1970-71, with the sitcom For the Love of Ada, where he was paired with Irene Handl as two pensioners finding companionship and romance. Gentle and heartwarming, it prompted a feature film of the same name in 1972.

Wilfred Pickles died in 1978. Looking back at the peak years of the 1940s and 50s, his legacy to broadcasting was more than the popularity of his programmes. They broke new ground in several ways. Probably the most significant was that he featured ordinary people in front of the microphone and camera lens and showed they could be entertaining. Furthermore, his easy style and regional accent eroded the stuffiness of the BBC and broadcasting in general.

His programme formats were the basis for numerous television shows. Surprise, Surprise and Long Lost Family were both derived from Where Are You Now? Ask Pickles evolved into Ask Aspel, The Big Time, Jim'll Fix It and the basis for Britain's Got Talent. Have a Go demonstrated that quiz shows could be popular rather than academic, a style adopted in ITV's Take Your Pick and Double Your Money. However, Hughie Green was not best pleased when contestants replied: "I'll have a go" when asked if they would like to "double your money".

Wilfred Pickles was a reassuring presence in the war and postwar years: decent, reliable, approachable, an ideal friend and neighbour. Considering the success of Have a Go, he observed: "There's now't wrong with reet folk.' Clearly, there was now't wrong with Wilfred Pickles either.


Pepys Party Games
HAVE-A-GO
The WILFRED PICKLES Radio Party Game
For up to 12 players
Entertaining for the largest party
72 questions selected by Wilfred Pickles
Hints by Wilfred Pickles himself on how to get the maximum fun at your party

The popularity of Have a Go and Ask Pickles led to spin-off products including board games and books.

DOON THE CLUB

John Stoker recounts the perils faced by comedians in the working men's clubs of the north-east

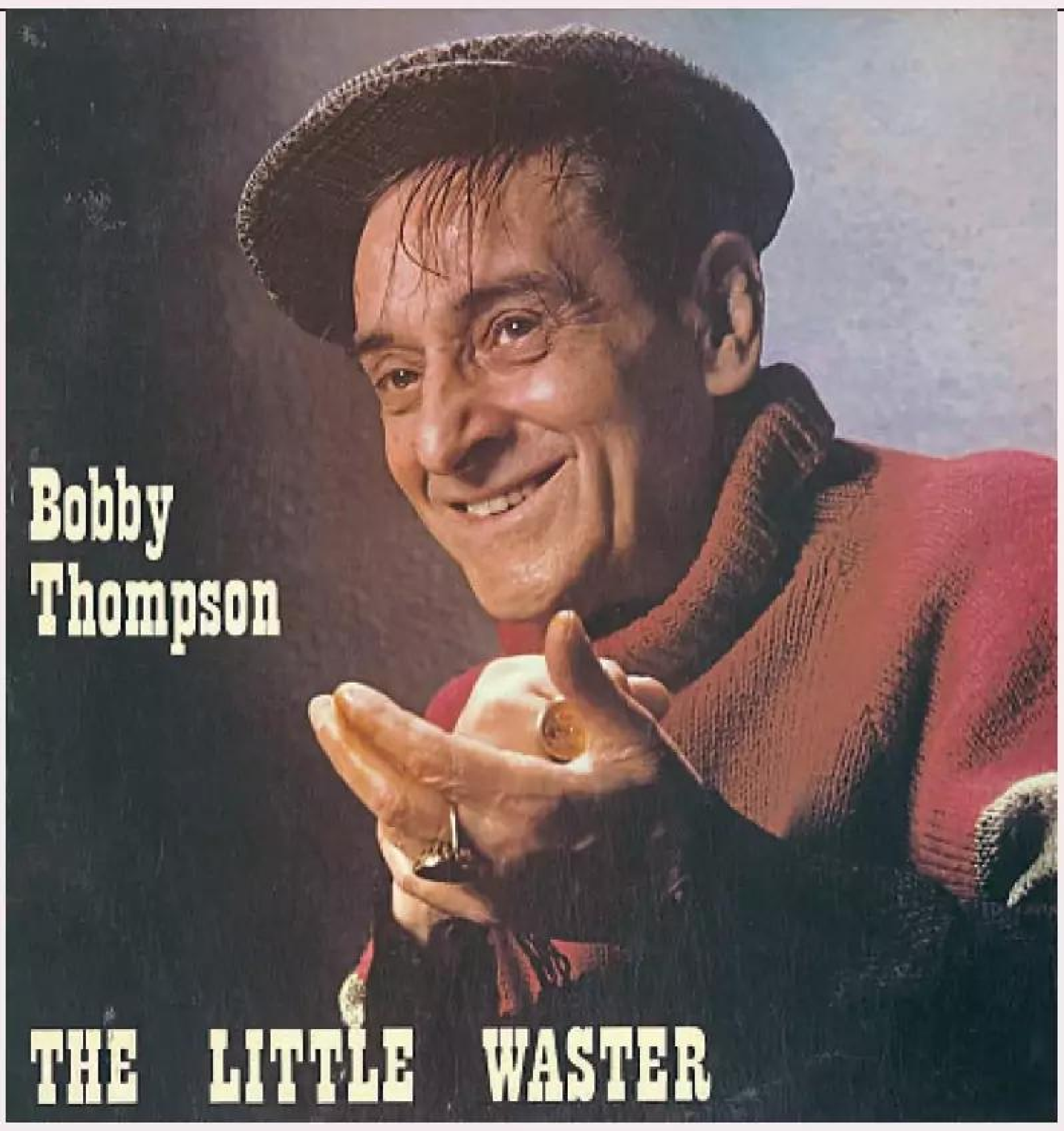
On Monday 26 April 1976, Sid James collapsed on stage at the Empire Theatre in Sunderland. When the theatre manager rang the producer of the show to tell him his star had just died, he received a surprising reply. "Everybody dies in Sunderland." Unfortunately, Sid really was dead. Over many years, the Sunderland Empire had been a variety house to fear having acquired the reputation of being "the comedian's graveyard". If you could get laughs at the Empire, you could play anywhere in the country.

It was challenged for that title by other theatres in the north-east. Des O'Connor remembered playing first house at the Palace Theatre in Newcastle one Monday night at the beginning of his career. He performed his act to a near silent house and when he finished there was silence until one member of the audience gave him a slow handclap. Des went back to his dressing room and cried.

If audiences in the theatres were bad, they could be equally as dreadful in the clubs. Dick Irwin was a comedian who had played the local circuit for more than 20 years and, as we were working together, at that time, on programmes for Metro Radio, he invited me to watch him perform one Sunday lunchtime at a club in Sunderland. After his introduction by the club secretary, Dick did a quarter of an hour to a sea of Sunday newspapers. When he finished there was a

Top: Geordie writer and artist Scott Dobson with comedian Dick Irwin who played the local circuit for more than 20 years.

Photographs: (Main) Dillon/ANL/Shutterstock, (Des) Archives New Zealand



Left: Bobby Thompson was a popular Sunderland comedian who would pack out venues. Right: Des O'Connor having a better time of it during a 1974 tour of New Zealand than he did during a Monday night in Newcastle.

very modest round of applause. Dick left the stage to be followed by an "exotic dancer". Suddenly all interest in the written news vanished and the room came alive.

I couldn't help asking the club secretary why there was any need to book a comedian. He looked at me in amazement: "Why son, the lads have got to have their entertainment."

Dick was more philosophical: "I've seen worse, and I didn't get paid off." That was the one thing that club comedians feared most: being stopped before their act had finished and dragged from the stage as they had failed to raise enough laughs.

Like many other comedians, he was used to being interrupted in his act for other reasons such as the news that the meat pies had arrived, and that the audience should get them while they were hot. But there had been worse. One night, Dick was working a club in Newcastle and he was going pretty well. The audience was with him when suddenly a club official grabbed the microphone in the middle of one of his jokes. "Ladies and gentlemen," said the official, his voice cracking with emotion. "I've some very sad news for yer's all. Your club treasurer, his wife and their two bairns have been involved in a serious accident. Their car was hit by a lorry and I'm sorry to say that they were all killed. So, I'd like yer's all to stand up and give two minutes' silence in memory of our treasurer and his family."

The silence was only broken by some sobbing until the official raised his head and gave the microphone back to Dick with the words: "All right, Dick, away you go again." For once, Dick was at a loss for words.

On radio Dick was a natural interviewer as he chatted to people who were completely at ease with his style. One day he talked to a champion pigeon racer who showed him his prize bird. "He's been wonderful, a real winner," said the proud owner, "but now he's going to retire."

"And he'll be having a good rest," added Dick. "Oh yes," replied the owner. "Me wife makes a lovely pie."

One of Dick's rivals was Bobby Thompson who became something of a local legend. If he appeared in panto at the Sunderland Empire, he would pack the place out and, being careful with his cash, he slept in his caravan in the theatre car park. All was going well with his career until Tyne Tees Television tried to turn him into a sitcom star. The series was a disaster and Bobby turned to drink as his work dried up. Thankfully, a local agent revived his fortunes, and he returned to incredible success in the clubs, generating a tax bill of more than £20,000 for a single year. So why was he so successful?

Bobby understood his audience and he empathised with them, becoming not just an entertainer but a social commentator. He would begin his act with a statement: "There's a lot of debt about. We call it debt, others call it credit. When they're knocking on your door for their money just remember that paint lasts longer than skin."

One of the most memorable parts of his act concerned his supposed activities during World War Two. "One night there was an air raid, and as we're leaving the house she says she's left her teeth behind. I told her they're dropping bombs not pork sandwiches. When I got me call-up, she says to her mother: 'You'll miss him.' Her mother says: 'I just hope the Germans don't.'"

In Bobby's world, the entire country was an extension of the north-east and a wartime visit to Buckingham Palace revealed it to be inhabited by Geordie royals. "I knocked on the front door as I didn't want to go around the back because she might have had her washing out. I was lucky to find her in as it was Thursday and she usually went to her mother's house to collect her catalogue money. I said: 'Hello Mrs Sovereign, is George about?' She said: 'He's in the back, Bob, cobbling his boots.'"

The only time I met Bobby was in the early 1970s when he was playing a week of variety at, of all places, the Sunderland Empire. "I love this place, I really do," he said. "I've known some great times and great audiences. It was full of families as well. They knew you and you knew them. It was a pleasure to be here."

Both Dick and Bobby are long gone but the clubs have still survived, even if the entertainment is now provided by a new breed of comedian determined to push the boundaries of comedy as far as they will go and beyond. You now have to be daring to be memorable.

A Catholic club had booked a comedian who was proving very popular on the club circuit. But the members got more than they bargained for. It was a Saturday night as the comic leapt on to the stage to a healthy round of applause. All was going well until he looked above him and saw the figure of Christ on the cross and observed: "Aye well, I see you got the bugger who stole your safe."

He didn't have time to draw breath for within a few moments he was bundled off the stage and shown the door. Being paid off was also a sin. The times may have changed but the audience hadn't.

Grand Designs

Sandra Blemster looks at how the work of William Morris continues to resonate

A major new exhibition, Morris Mania: How Britain's Greatest Designer Went Viral, has recently been launched to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the William Morris Gallery at Walthamstow, east London. Curated by Hadrian Garrard, it highlights the inventive talent, popularity and legacy of textile designer William Morris.

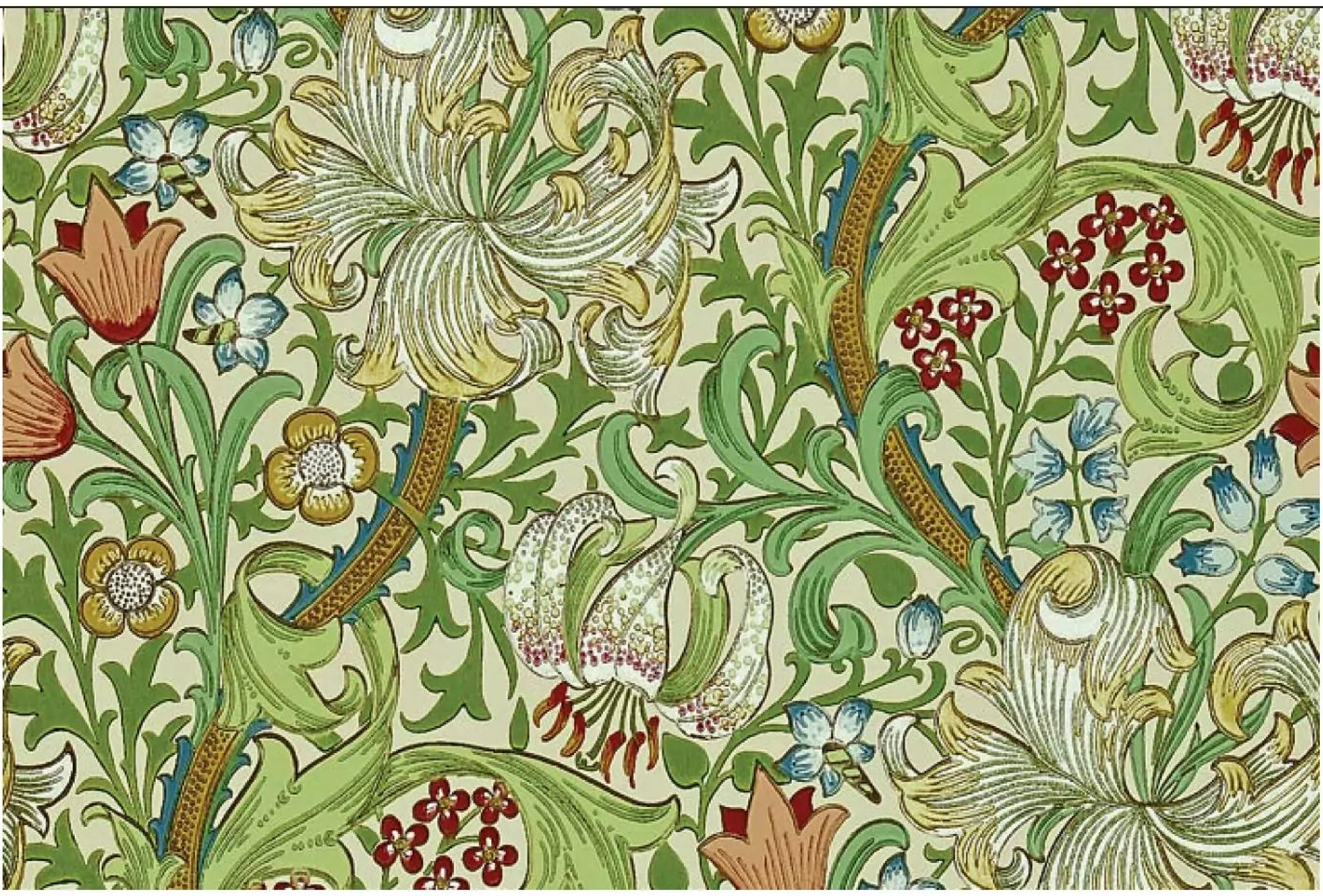
Born in Walthamstow, then part of Essex, Morris was a socialist and a founding member of the Arts and Crafts movement, which believed art and beauty should be accessible to all. In the 1890s and early 1900s, this movement thrived in large cities including London, Birmingham, Glasgow and Manchester; the latter home to the only Morris & Co shop outside London.

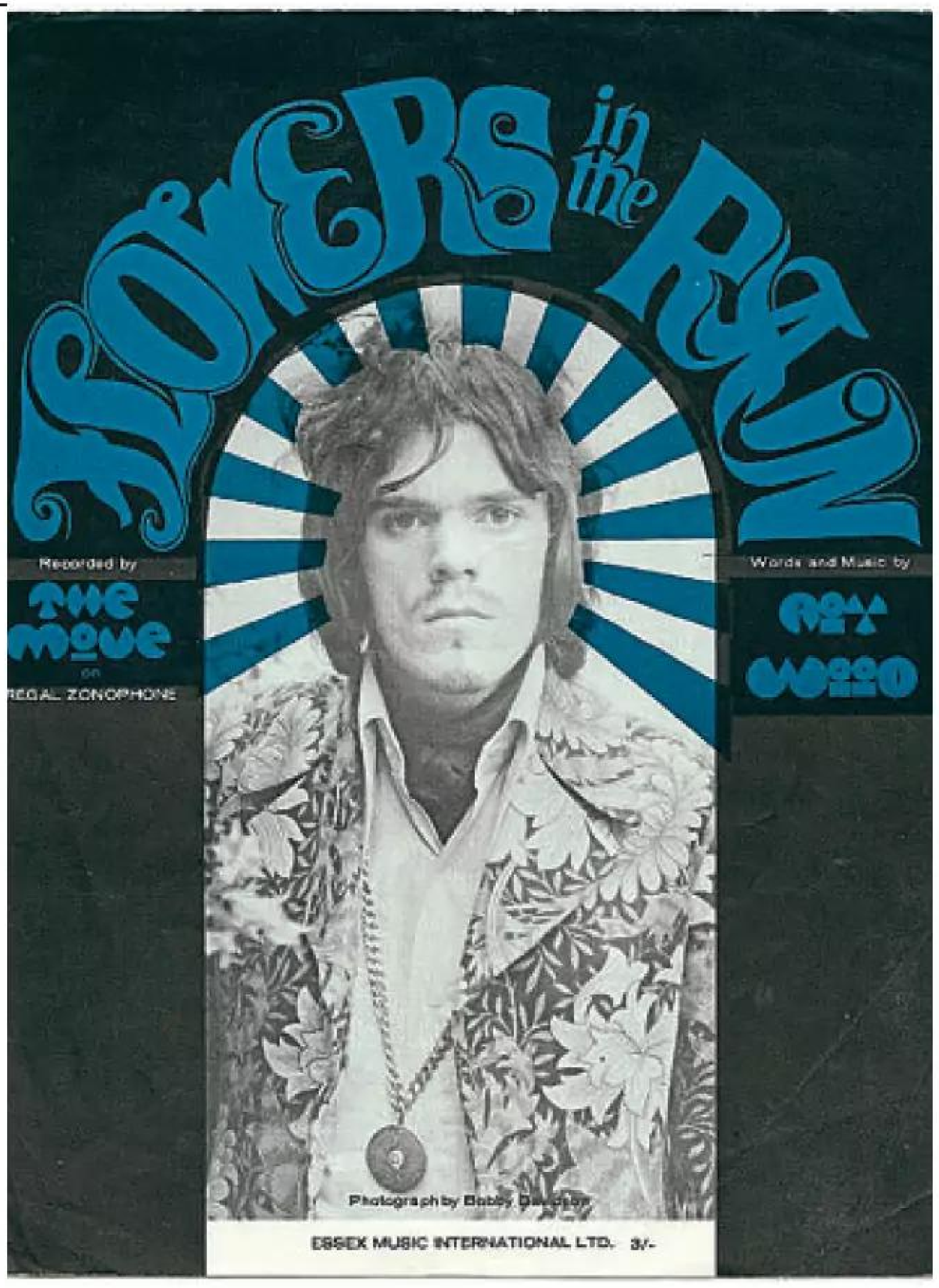
Morris's intricate designs, inspired by nature, feature an abundance of birds, flowers and plants. His illustrations included the Strawberry Thief, Larkspur and Willow, which ended up on his own wallpaper, the process of which he mastered during the 1870s. His work revolutionised fashions and principles of that time and has left a long-lasting impression on our culture.

Top: Fashion designer Zahra Amber and her bridegroom had William Morris jackets specially made for their wedding, marrying in Walthamstow and celebrating at the William Morris Gallery.

Born in March 1834, the son of a wealthy broker, Morris grew up in Woodhall House at Chignal Smealey, near Chelmsford, Essex. Having a passion for nature, he could often be found exploring the landscapes of parks, forests and churches. This love of nature would deeply inspire his work. In 1848, a year after his father's death, 14-year-old Morris moved to Water House in Forest Road, Walthamstow, a Grade II* Georgian house that is now the home of the William Morris Gallery.

On joining Oxford University, aged 18, he met his life-long friend, Edward Burne-



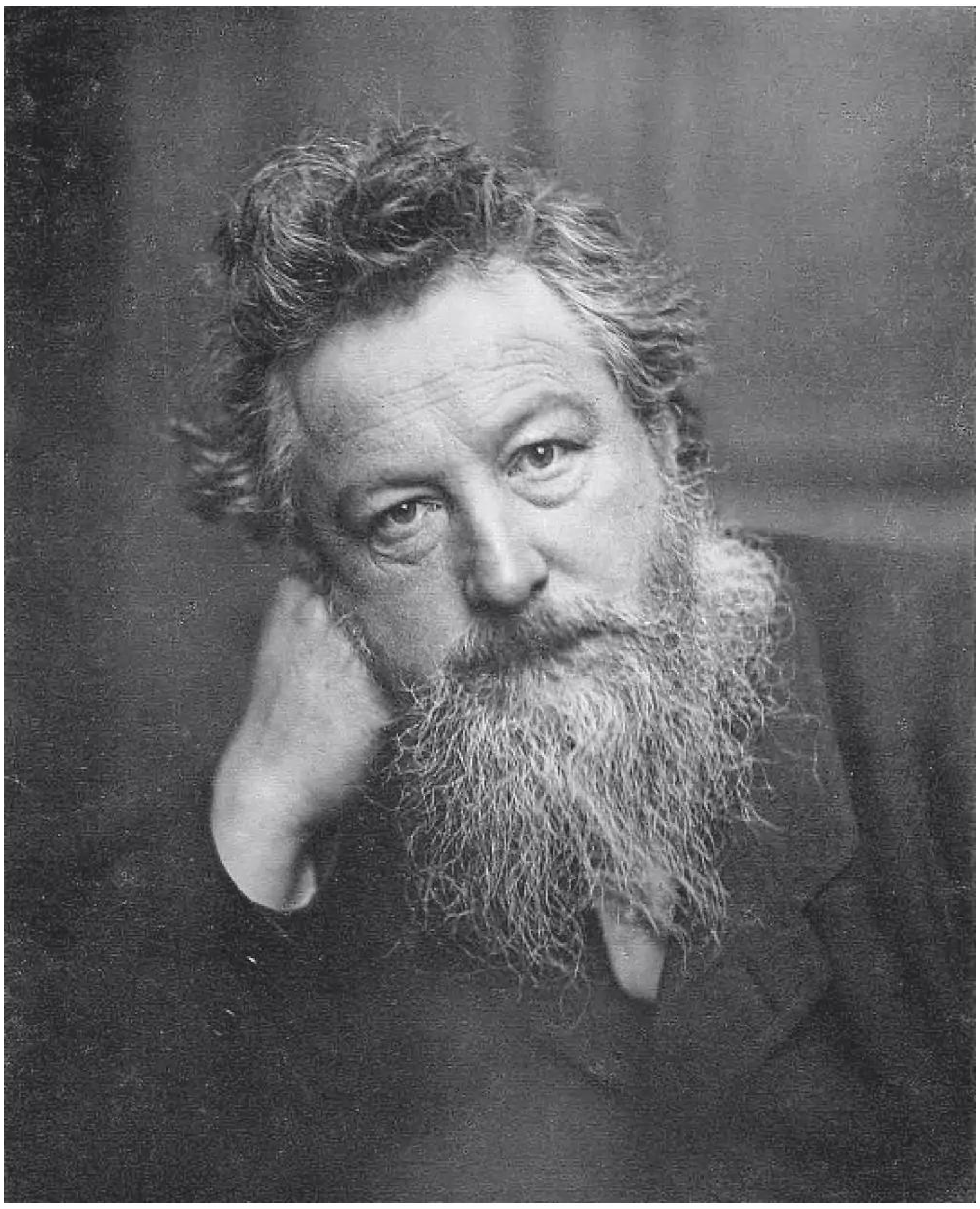


Left: Golden Lily, an archetypal Morris & Co design, was designed by head designer John Henry Dearle in 1899, three years after the death of William Morris. Right: Singer and songwriter Roy Wood wearing his William Morris chrysanthemum print Granny Takes a Trip jacket. Below: The work of William Morris, pictured aged 53, has left a long-lasting impression on our culture.

Jones, who became a renowned painter of the era. At the time, the inquisitive Morris, also a voracious reader, met a group of students known as "the Set", or "the Brotherhood". They relished romantic stories of medieval chivalry and read books by contemporaries such as John Ruskin, a philosopher and art historian who wrote The Stones of Venice (1853). In one chapter, Ruskin rejected what he viewed as the the moral ruin of Victorian art and society and called for a return to the values of the medieval age. This radical view resonated with young Morris and further paved his beliefs in the power of art to bring about change.

During Morris's time at university, he became increasingly aware of class divisions in society and the dehumanising systems of the Industrial Revolution and highly opposed them. Originally, he had gone to university to study for the church, but as time went on, he realised he was far more dedicated to his art. On finishing university, Morris started an apprenticeship in architecture, which he soon grew tired of. He then began a career as an artist, under the encouragement of Dante Gabriel Rosetti. Along with his friend Burne-Jones, they helped Rosetti paint the Arthurian murals at Oxford University.

During this time, he met Jane Burden, who became his wife. Morris asked Philip Webb, close friend and supervisor from his apprenticeship, to design a home for him and Jane, and so Red House was born. The house in Bexleyheath, south-east London was inspired by medieval times and was the catalyst for Morris to open his decorating firm Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. This specialised in embroidered hangings, and wall paintings to begin with.



Morris's works have inspired so many generations. In the 1960s, his botanical designs were worn by bohemians and hippies of the time. In 1966, the psychedelic boutique Granny Takes a Trip was born. Founded by graphic designer Nigel Waymouth, vintage clothes collector Sheila Cohen, and mod tailor John Pearse on the King's Road, it became synonymous with the "Dandie" fashions of the time. They created a three-buttoned jacket, using Morris & Co's Golden Lily furnishing fabric with a limited edition of 20. One of them was famously worn by Beatle George Harrison and another by Roy Wood, co-founder of the Move, Electric Light Orchestra, and Wizzard. The designer Ossie Clark wore a version of it, too, to attend an exhibition of work by his artist friend Patrick Procktor in 1968.

Susie and Peter Feely, both passionate collectors of vintage clothing, used to have a bespoke tailoring service, The Perfumed Garden, which, among other

Photograph: (Wedding jackets) Zahra Amber

beautiful fabrics, included William Morris's. Peter said: "When I started my own clothing label, my sole intention was to bring back garments not seen since they became popular in counter-culture London back in the mid to late 1960s. I wanted to recreate jackets and tunics made by the likes of Granny Takes a Trip, but with my own subtle design features.

"Susie and myself were sourcing original antique heavy weave fabrics for our garments or original Sanderson prints. We used many iconic designs from Golden Lily to Bachelor's Button. I have definitely seen quite a few designers and even high street companies using William Morris designs or William Morris-inspired designs on a wide variety of garments since we first started Perfumed Garden clothing."

The William Morris Gallery exhibition highlights how relevant Morris's designs still are. One couple even had William Morris suits specially made (as featured in the exhibition). Fashion designer Zahra Amber said: "We married in Walthamstow, celebrating at the William Morris Gallery – a world away from my homeland, Kashmir. This is surreal yet serendipitous, as Morris has long been a guiding force in my creative journey.

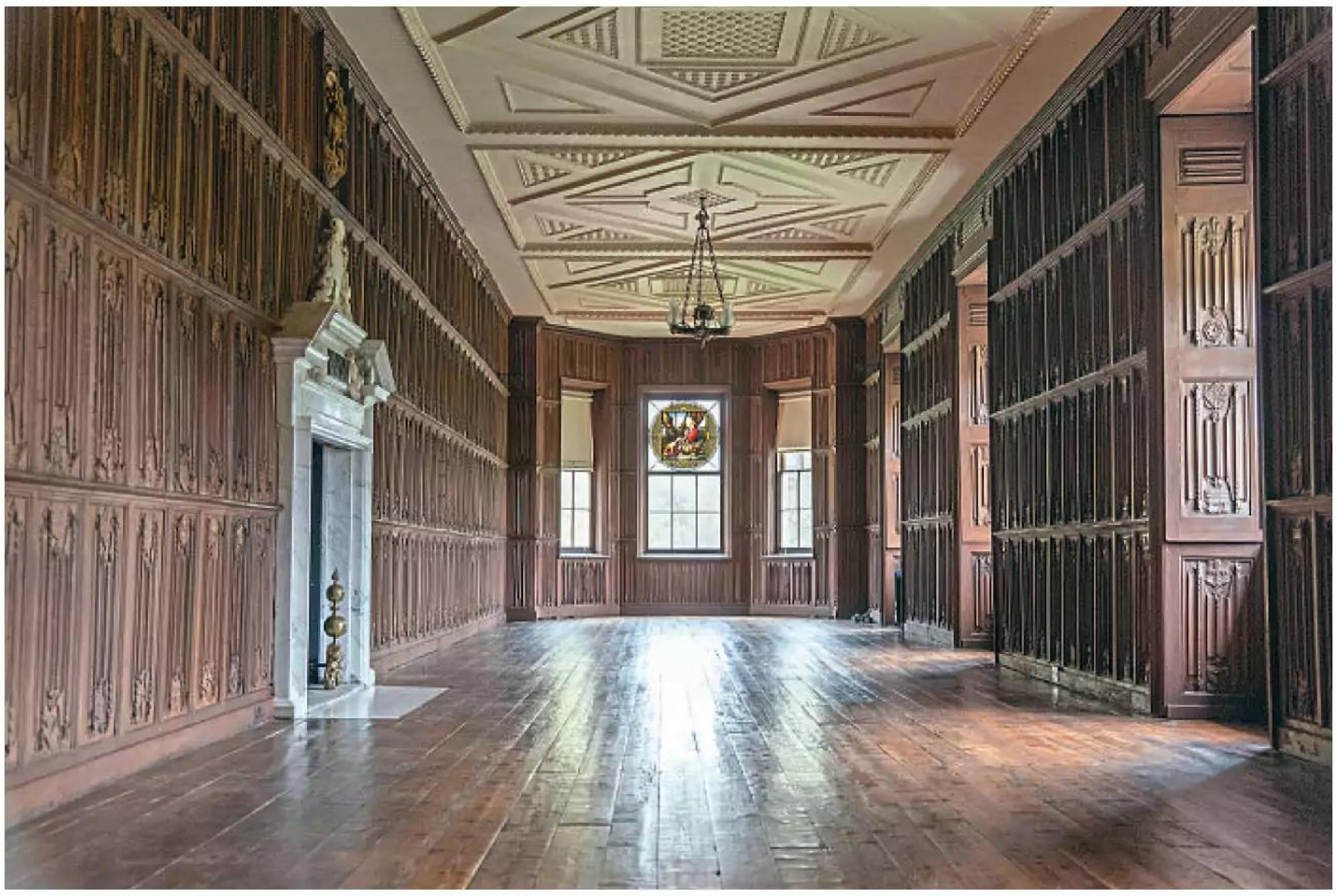
"The print was chosen for its deep red, a south Asian bride's emblem of love and vitality, intertwined with motifs that echo my bond with nature. I chose blue, my companion's favourite colour, to perfectly balance the harmony. I sourced the upholstery fabric in London and entrusted the stitching and exquisite embroidery to the skilled artisans of Pakistan."

Hadrian Garrard, director of the William Morris Gallery and curator of Morris Mania, sums up Morris's popularity: "While we've been thinking about how Morris's products are made in today's world, what has become clear is the deep affection that people have for his work. William Morris's patterns are what people grow up with and provide a backdrop for people's celebrations, arguments, grief, and daily lives. People allow Morris into their homes and it is this intimate relationship as well as the beauty of the designs which I think gives his work its underlying power."

Morris Mania: How Britain's Greatest Designer Went Viral is open until 21 September. William Morris Gallery, Lloyd Park, Forest Road, Walthamstow, London E17 4PP (020 8496 4390, wmgallery.org.uk)

A FINE VYNTAGE

The 16th century carved panels at The Vyne really take some beating, says **Claire Saul**



Top: The Vyne's stunning, 25m-long Oak Gallery boasts more than 400 individually carved heraldic panels from floor to ceiling.

More than 500 years ago, eminent Tudor courtier William Sandys created a grand moated manor house, remodelling the cluster of medieval buildings on his north Hampshire "Vyne Green" Estate. Sandys was a royal favourite, loyally serving King Henry VII before continuing his flourishing career with King Henry VIII, who appointed him a Knight of the Garter and, later, his Lord Chamberlain. Several times over the years, Sandys would host Henry VIII and his first two queens, Katharine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn, at the Vyne.

When ownership of the house passed from the Sandys family to the Chutes in 1653, it was in a poor state and considered old-fashioned. Lawyer Chaloner Chute, later speaker of the House of Commons, decided to demolish almost two-thirds of its buildings and courtyards to create a new, symmetrical facade. There were interior changes, too, rooms which continued to evolve with the changing tastes and required functionality of its owners over the centuries.

However, many elements of the 16th century house remain, most notably the Vyne's stunning, 25m-long Oak Gallery, which boasts more than 400 individually carved heraldic panels from floor to ceiling. Created by Sandys to show his powerful connections, the gallery showcases the most powerful names in Henry VIII's court, from Cardinal Wolsey to local officials. Seen by everyone from Henry and courtly rivals to tenants late with their payments, this is a room designed to make a statement.

"The history contained in this space is staggering," says Dominique Shembry, collections and house manager at The Vyne, which came under the care of the National Trust in 1956. "It's full of

Left: Pomegranates were the personal emblem of Queen Katharine of Aragon, symbolising fertility and her Spanish homeland. Right: A conservator at work in the Oak Gallery at the Vyne as part of a complex, six-month conservation programme.

drama as well as beauty and it must have wowed everyone who saw it, including the king. There are 406 carved panels filled with badges, crests and initials and featuring the kind of heraldic symbol you might expect to see, such as shields, but there are some very bizarre ones too. There is a creature with the head of a horse and the tail of a fish, known as a hippocamp."

The Oak Gallery looks particularly magnificent this year, following a complex, six-month conservation programme conducted by specialists and National Trust staff. After a successful £5.4m roof project to make the Vyne watertight in recent years, humidity in the gallery had significantly dropped, exacerbating cracks and warping caused by years of expansion and contraction. Previous restoration work had also begun to fail.

The programme involved the careful cleaning of each panel before splits were closed with thin fillets of oak, to provide stability, and some small sections recarved. Woodworm and deathwatch beetle damage was repaired. Where repairs were made, the panels were regrained to blend in. Dendrochronologists used tree-ring data to date the timber to 1519, when construction on the Oak Gallery began, and identified the wood as Baltic oak from Lithuania.

Paint experts revealed the panels were coated in a red oxide then painted red-brown, to hide the sap that bled from the wood. The panels had several coats of paint over the centuries. Visitors today see its most recent, Victorian scheme, a hand-painted wood grain effect. Research was also conducted on the symbolism behind the carved emblems.

For the immediate future, the full glory of the Oak Gallery can be appreciated without the portraits and furniture that have dressed it for the past two centuries. These have been moved out to show the carvings to full effect and to display some previously obscured from view, including that denoting Sir Thomas More, although the explanation of his emblem, an ox head above two fish-like monsters, remains a mystery.

Sandys was a staunch supporter of Queen Katharine of Aragon as the 49 pomegranate carvings in the panels attest. This was her personal emblem, symbolising fertility and her Spanish homeland. William Sandys' own emblem of a winged half-goat appears in several panels, too. One emblem remains unidentified – a beautifully carved knight's helmet, created anonymously in the late 1980s to early 1990s to replace a disintegrated panel. Later this year, visitors unable to access the Oak Gallery, which is on the first floor, will be able to enjoy a 360-degree virtual visit.

"The Oak Gallery at The Vyne is a remarkable example of Tudor craftsmanship and storytelling through woodcarving," says Loredana Mannina, National Trust senior national conservator. "This latest conservation project has not only helped protect its intricate decorative scheme but has also unveiled new insights into its history, construction, and past alterations.

"Much of the conservation work was carried out in situ, providing visitors with a rare opportunity to witness expert conservation in action. Conservation at the National Trust is not just about preserving objects but about uncovering the stories they hold, ensuring that our heritage remains engaging and meaningful for future generations."

The Vyne, Vyne Road, Sherborne St John, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG24 9HL (01256 883858, nationaltrust.org.uk/the-vyne)

Tudor Treat

The Vyne also boasts a fine Tudor chapel, built as part of William Sandys' great manor and considered by architectural historians to be one of the finest private chapels in England. Its 16th century talking points include its intricately carved choir stalls and vibrant majolica tiles, which originate from Antwerp.

Particularly of note is the chapel's rare, pre-reformation Flemish stained glass, originally commissioned by William Sandys for the Chapel of the Holy Ghost in nearby Basingstoke. According to legend, the stained glass was wrapped and hidden in a pond to protect it from the Roundheads during the civil war and later brought to The Vyne where it was trimmed to fit the chapel windows.

The lower range features King Henry VIII flanked by Katharine of Aragon and his elder sister, Margaret. Sandys was among the entourage which accompanied the young Margaret when she rode to Edinburgh in 1503 for her marriage to James IV of Scotland.

Photographs: National Trust Images/Megan Taylor

BEST OF BRITISH puzzle page

Twenty Questions

How well do you know Britain – Past and Present? Test your knowledge with our June quiz

1. Who became prime minister for the third time in June 1935?
2. Who was the Beatles' original bass guitarist?
3. Who had a Top 10 hit with the song Jeans On and wrote Fourscore, the Channel 4 launch music?
4. Who played Elizabeth Bellamy in the drama series Upstairs, Downstairs?
5. In which country did the England national football team make its World Cup debut on 25 June 1950?
6. Which crime writer created the characters DCI Carol Jordan and clinical psychologist Dr Tony Hill?
7. Which guitarist co-founded the Clash and Big Audio Dynamite?
8. Who is the lead singer and only constant member of Simply Red?
9. Who is reportedly the UK's richest living artist?
10. Announced in the London Gazette of 5 June 1970, who was the first actor to be awarded a peerage?
11. Who played Rachel in Cold Feet and Emily in Friends?
12. Whose directing work for Hammer included the films The Curse of Frankenstein, Dracula and The Hound of the Baskervilles?
13. Released on 13 June 1985, what was Roger Moore's final James Bond film?
14. Who played the lead in the television series The Adventures of Robin Hood, and Nayland Smith in the films The Blood of Fu Manchu and The Castle of Fu Manchu?
15. Who played Professor Henry Higgins in the original Broadway and London productions of My Fair Lady and the subsequent film adaptation?
16. Which fictional character was inspired by the real-life veterinary surgeon Donald Sinclair who died on 28 June 1995?
17. Which Disney star played George Banks in Mary Poppins, Professor Emelius Browne in Bedknobs and Broomsticks, and Peter Thorndyke in The Love Bug?
18. Who was the original host of Countdown?
19. Which character, who wore a giant papier-mache head, was created and performed by the musician, comedian and artist Chris Sievey who died on 21 June 2010?
20. Which former Liberal Democrats leader lost his seat as the MP for Ross, Skye and Lochaber a month before his death on 1 June 2015?

And I quote...

Which luxury SUV can, according to Autotrader, "be complicated, costly vehicles with very expensive parts?"

Dialect Detective

Britain has many wonderful regional dialects. Can you spot the correct definition for each of these examples?

1. Yort (*Lancashire*)
a) An ale-house
b) A yard or field
c) A scarecrow

2. Sparkid (Somerset)
a) A sow
b) Speckled
c) To spay

3. Hornicle (*East Sussex*)
a) A hornet
b) A small bull
c) A farmer's inn

4. Grint (*Norfolk*)
a) Grit
b) A little ditch
c) Black mud

Cryptic Crossword

Compiled by CADOC

1		2		3	■	4		5		6
	■		■		■		■		■	
7			■	8						
	■		■		■		■	■	■	
9				■	10			11		
■	■		■	12	■		■		■	■
13						■	14			15
	■	■	■		■	16	■		■	
17		18					■	19		
	■		■		■		■		■	
20					■	21				

Across

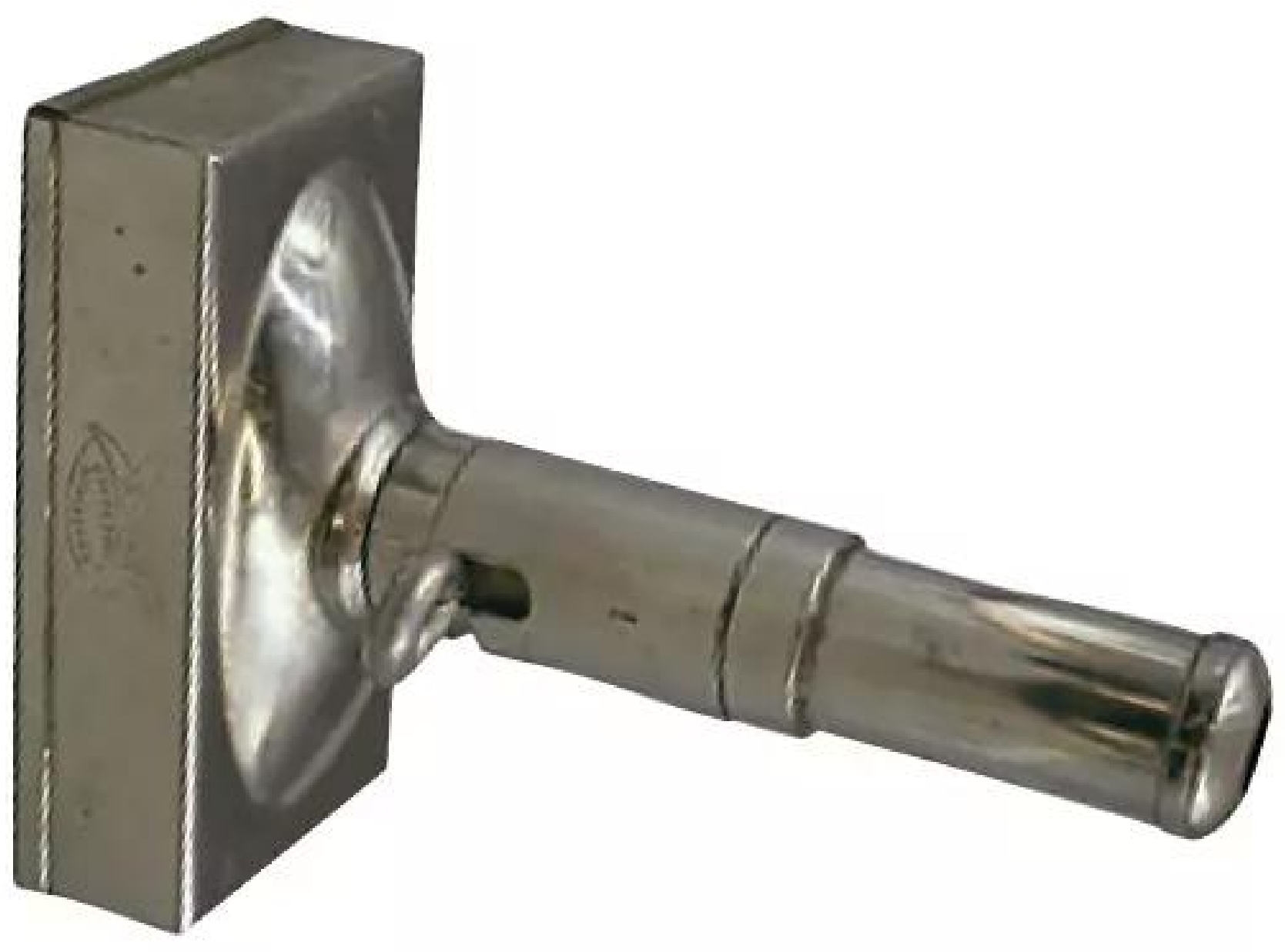
1 and 4 Across. Strangely I am editor's programme-finder (5,5)
4. See 1 Across
7. Flanagan or Abbott say is American friend (3)
8. A beech for example included in Grand National location (7)
9. Terrible time found on the agenda (4)
10. Did Prime Minister get top place around London Symphony Orchestra principally? (6)
13. Enid who wrote – in wobbly tones (6)
14. Hairstyle that initially personified every romantic maiden (4)
17. Iris or Rupert sees Rod much changed (7)
19. See 21 Across
20. What (sweet) little girls were, firstly, made of (5)
21 and 19 Across. Confused crowd up around 50? It's that time again (5,3)

Down

1. Jewish leader seen to endlessly go on a bit (5)
2. Like Ken, the comedian so to speak, old and frail (7)
3. Sharif found in customary setting (4)
4. Do wrong with net overturned beginning in Wimbledon about now (6)
5. Damage created by arm wrestling (3)
6. A nice finish caused by Martin who appeared in Wall Street? (5)
11. Princess Di was one – so was Tracy (7)
12. Red, white or blue say – soldiers troop it about now (6)
13. Shillings around start of money – I dodged them in the Blitz (5)
15. Was gloomy about my two-stroke? (5)
16. Bernard was found up around hospital (4)
18. Is such time some jazz to tease people about? (3)

What is it?

Wafer thin? Wafer thick, more like.



The solutions to this month's puzzles are on page 80

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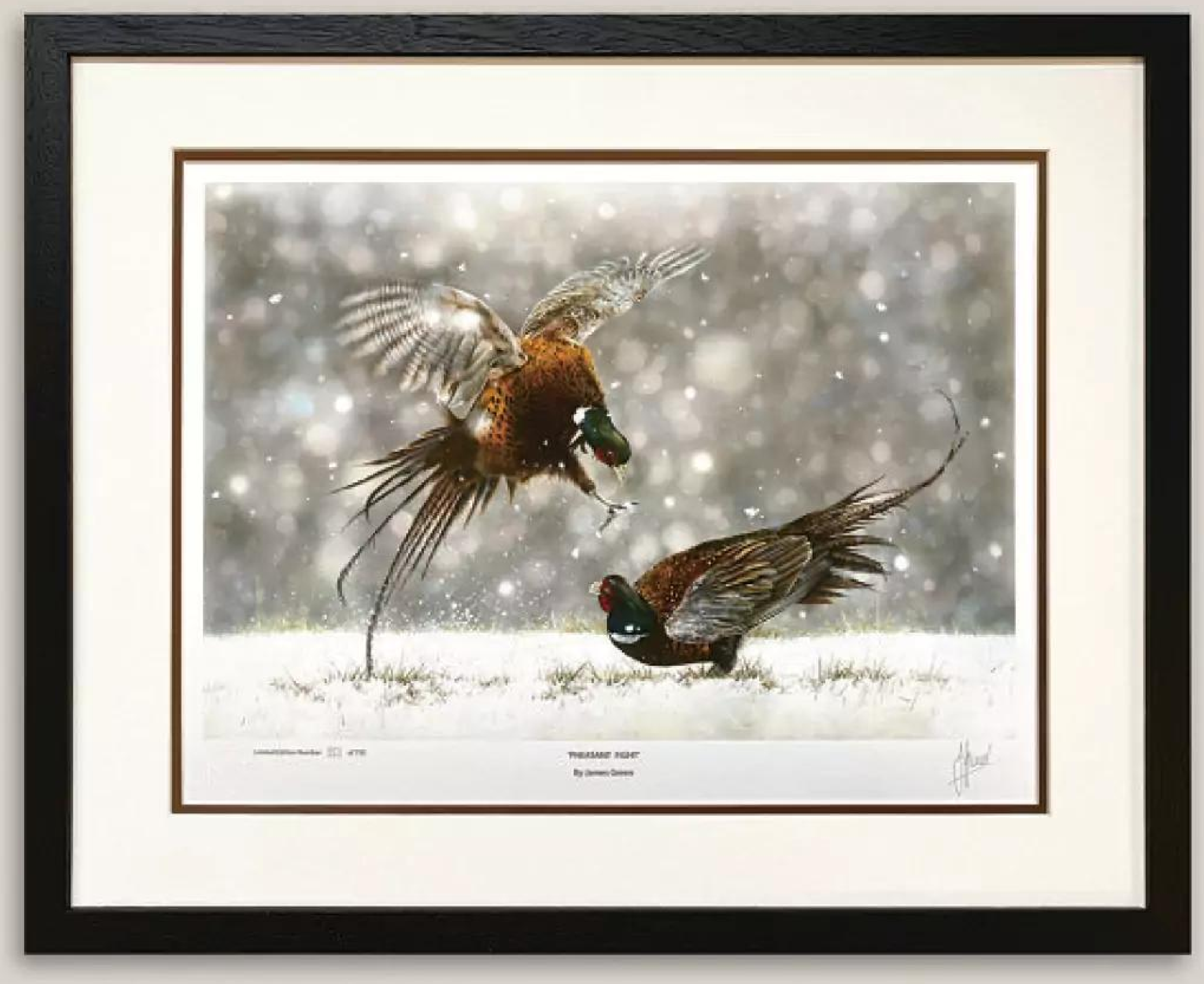

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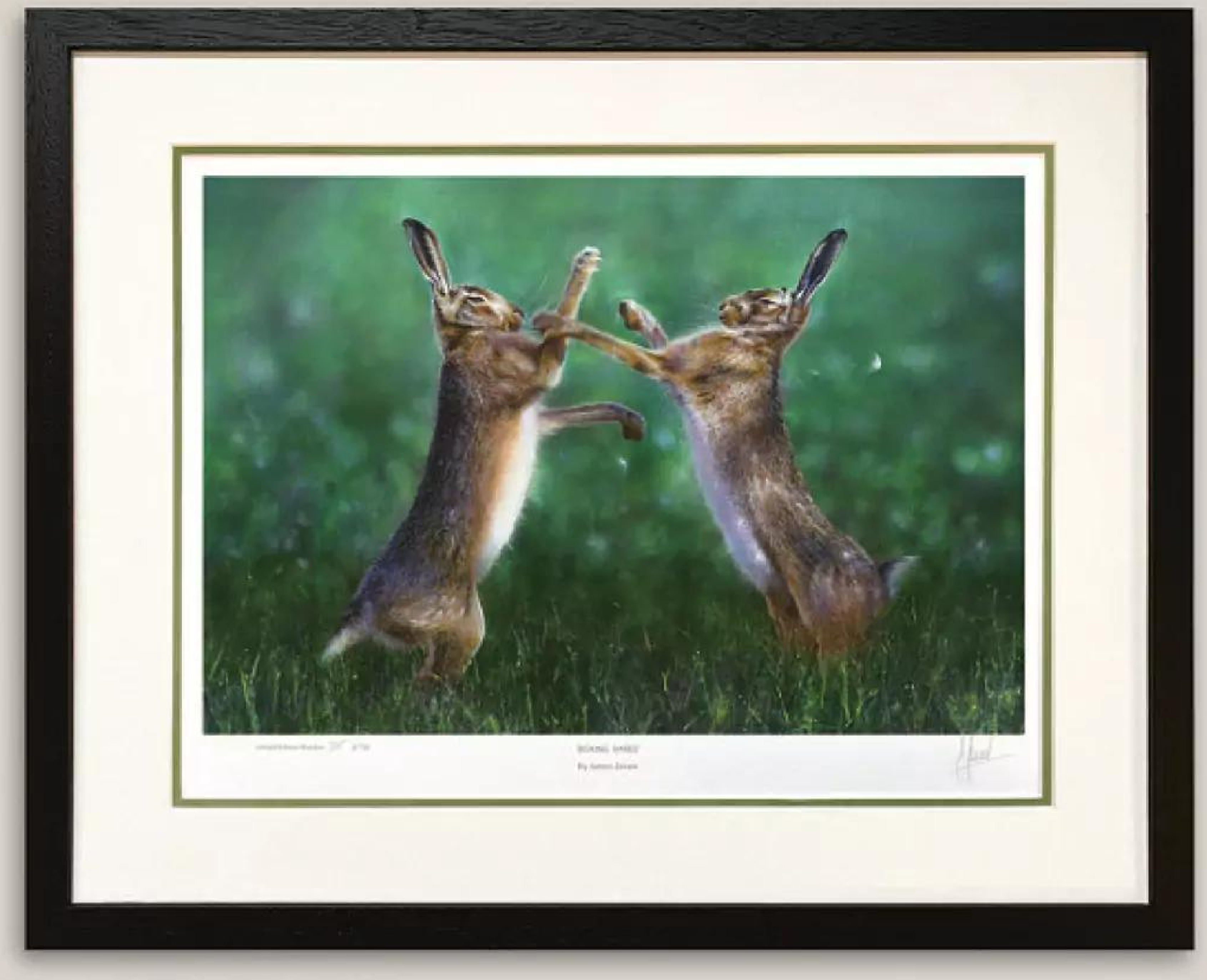

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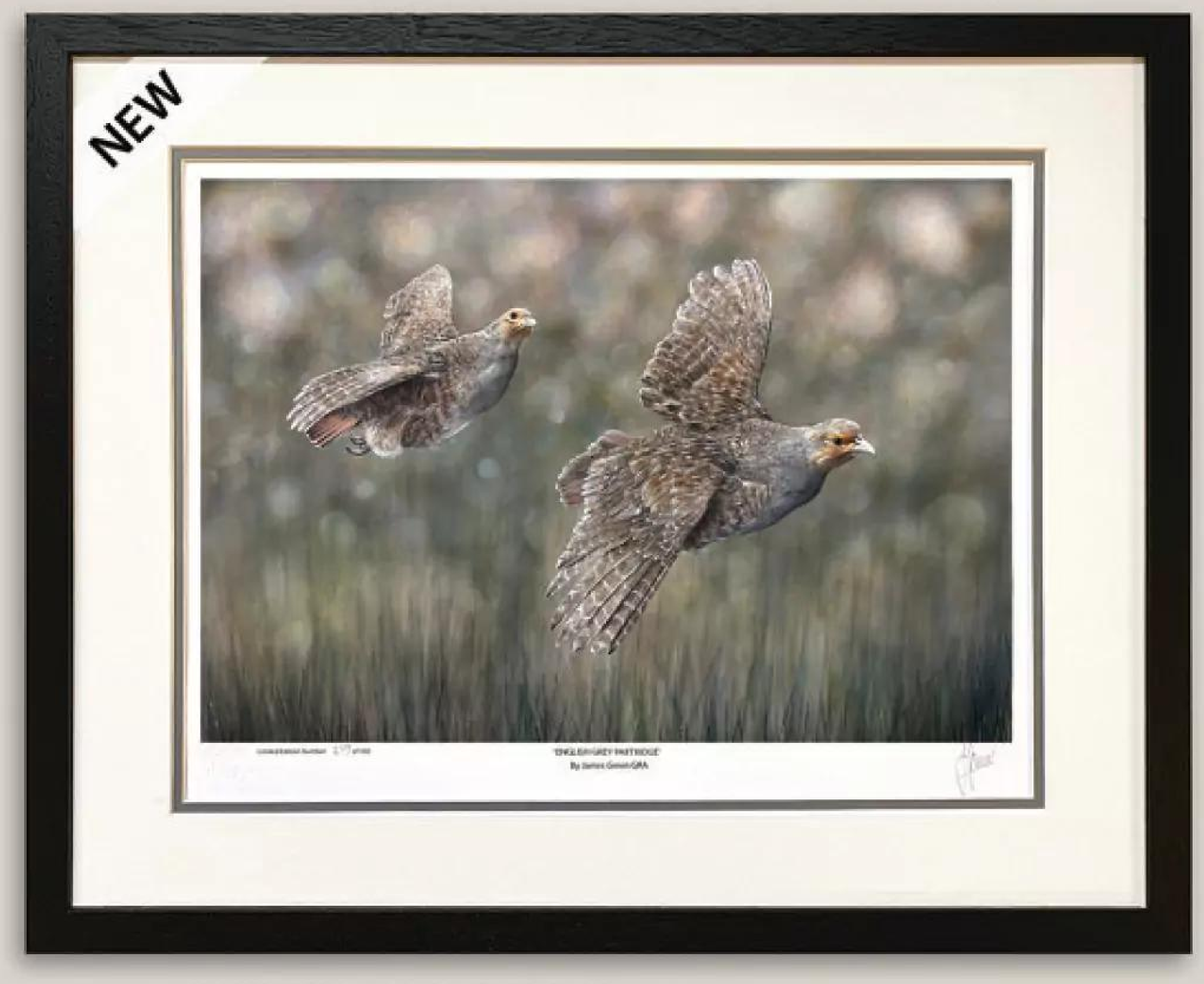

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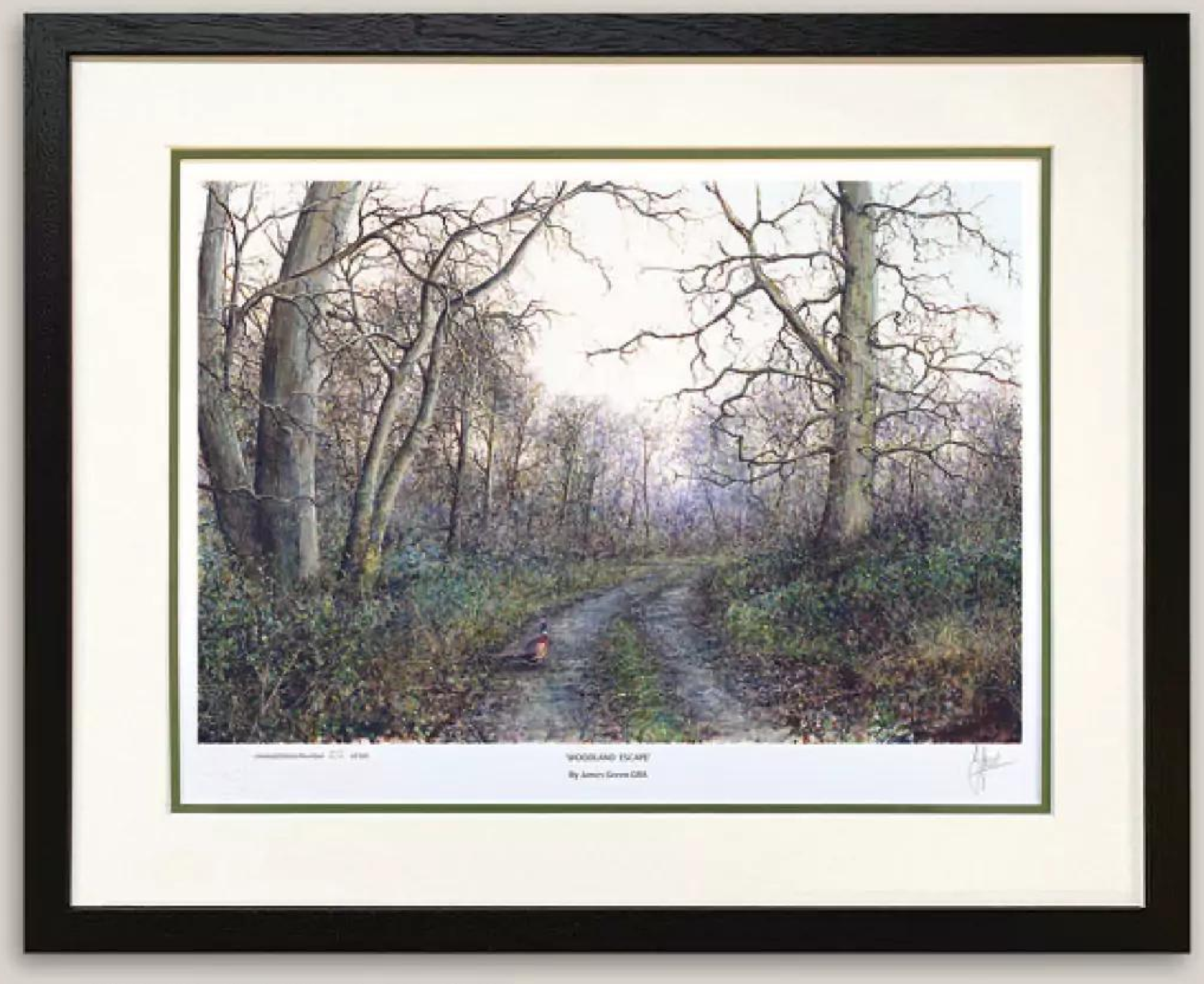

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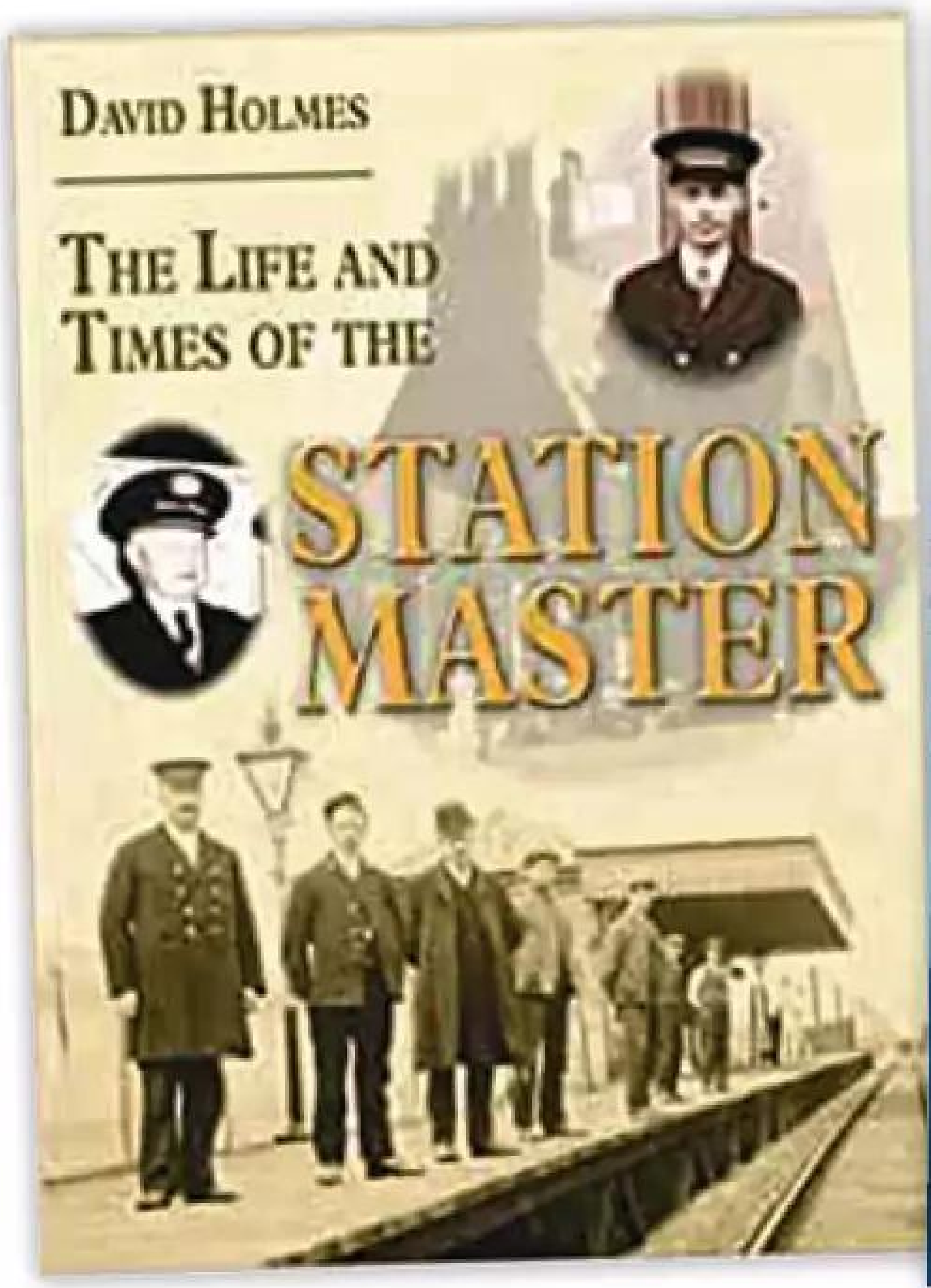
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Fleet Air Arm Legends
SUPERMARINE SEAFIRE
1
MATTHEW WILLIS

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★★★★★

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BEST OF BRITISH

PAST AND PRESENT

SIMON STABLER, EDITOR

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Bookshelf

David Brown checks out the latest releases

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Doors of London

By Cath Harries & Melanie Backe-Hansen, Sheldrake Press, hardback, £25

Most nights on the television news, we get a glimpse of the same famous London doorway. There are, however, more interesting doors than just No 10 Downing Street, each of which has a story to tell, and its style and presentation gives us clues to the history and importance of the dwelling or business that it serves.

Subtitled Styles & Stories, Art & Architecture, this glorious, colourful volume presents a great feel for the character of the capital, combining the talents of photographer Cath Harries and house historian Melanie Backe-Hansen and featuring 500 public and private doorways.

Harries tells how she was hooked by doors when she was taking photographs for a pub guide – from art deco examples to modern street art.

A brief introduction informs us of some typical doors from each historical period from medieval to postwar developments, before beginning the grand tour in the City of London and spreading out to the suburbs.

It's not just about the doors themselves, either. Often the attraction is down to the people that lived behind them, for example, Dr Johnson's House, 27 Gough Square, situated in a small courtyard off Fleet Street. While we're in the neighbourhood, it would be rude not to call in at the Lamb Tavern, Leadenhall Market, and Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese, Wine Office Court.

A day in London can be an expensive outing, but walking round the streets looking at the different architecture cannot fail to be rewarding. It's a free art and history lesson, too.

Piers of England and Wales

By Steve Edmunds, Amberley Publishing, paperback, £19.99

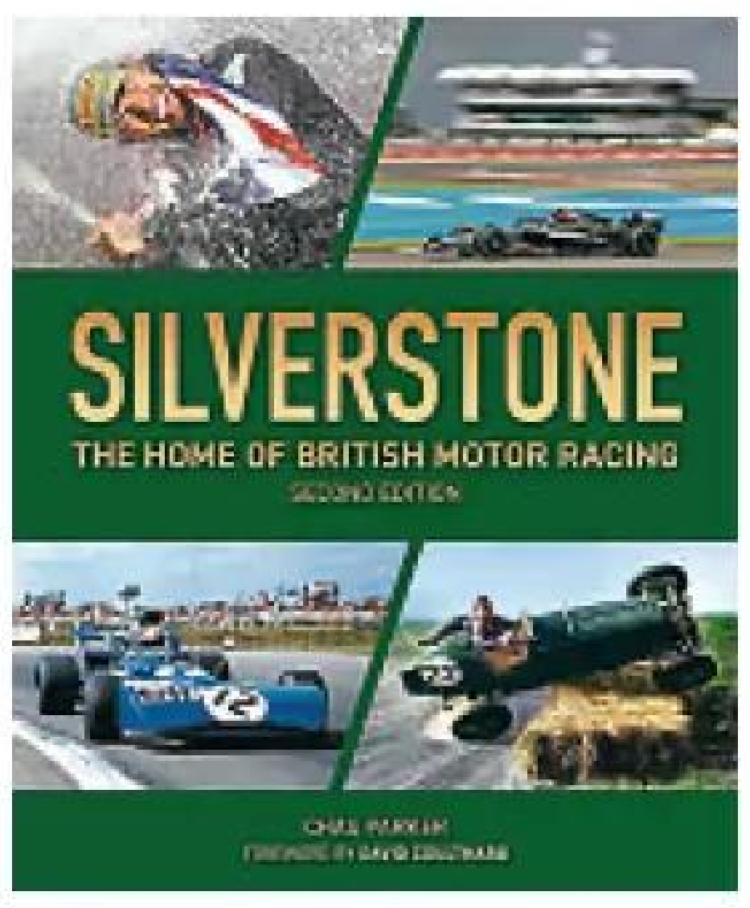
Growing up close to the east coast of England, I was familiar at an early age with two piers situated at either side of The Wash: Skegness in Lincolnshire, and Hunstanton in Norfolk.

Skegness Pier opened in 1881 but had two large sections washed away in 1978. Today, the refurbished pier end just reaches the sea, while most of the amusement area is on dry land.

I remember my dad was against the idea of paying for us to walk along Hunstanton pier, something that would sadly have been impossible after 1978. He would doubtless have preferred Cromer Pier on the north-east coast of Norfolk, free to visit with a pavilion theatre offering traditional entertainment, and an RNLI lifeboat station perched on the end.

Cleethorpes Pier is now one of the shortest, at 102 metres, and these days the pavilion is the largest fish and chip restaurant in the country. Southend Pier in Essex remains the longest and, at 1.34 miles in length, it is certainly worth catching the train in at least one direction. Southwold's pier in Suffolk has been reborn and occasionally you can catch a boat trip from the jetty.

One of the best-known piers is perhaps Brighton's West Pier – or what's left of it. Fortunately, Brighton also has the Palace Pier, sometimes referred to as the "queen of piers". These, and the other remaining piers dotted around the English and Welsh coastline, are featured in this welcome, well-illustrated introduction to a quirky subject.



Silverstone: The Home of British Motor Racing (second edition)

By Chas Parker, Evro Publishing, hardback, £60

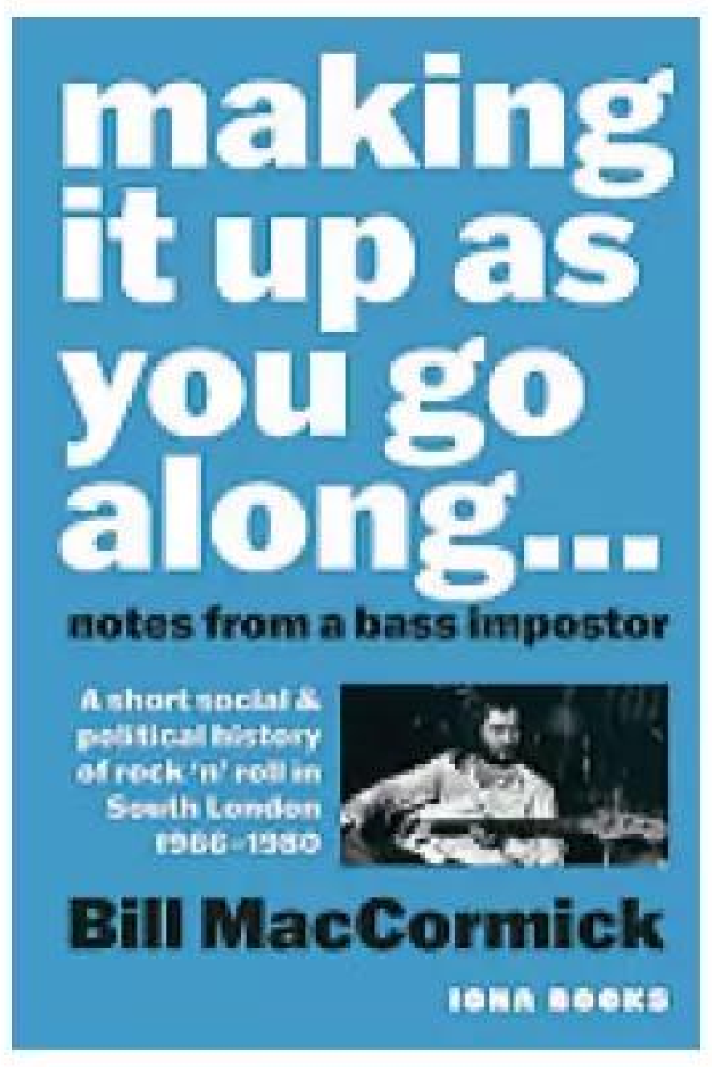
Quite a lot has happened in motor sport since the first volume about Silverstone appeared in print in 2013, not just developments at the circuit itself to extend the racing experience and services, but in outlying areas too. This revised, updated and extended book brings the story up to date in style.

After its brief spell as an operational RAF bomber base, industry such as the Rootes Group moved into the hangers for storing cars and parts, while a perimeter road and former runways was used to test a Frazer Nash car. Unauthorised races followed, such as the 1947 race named the Mutton Grand Prix, after a car hit a sheep.

In June 1948, RAC chairman Wilfred Andrews announced that a one-year lease had been negotiated for the Silverstone site, and it was hoped to hold an international grand prix there that October. It subsequently became the home of the British Grand Prix (at one time alternating with Brands Hatch in Kent), and in recent years has fought to maintain that status. In 2024, a new 10-year contract was signed to keep the prestigious event at the Northamptonshire venue.

A year-by-year look at the history of the course reveals some amazing cars and drivers, not just GP cars – motorcycles, go-karts and sports cars get a look-in, too. Meanwhile, visitors to the Silverstone Museum can try their skills at driving model cars on a replica track.

As the author remarks, Silverstone is still prone to the effects of the wind.



Making It Up as You Go Along… Notes from a Bass Imposter

By Bill MacCormick, Iona Books, paperback, £19.99

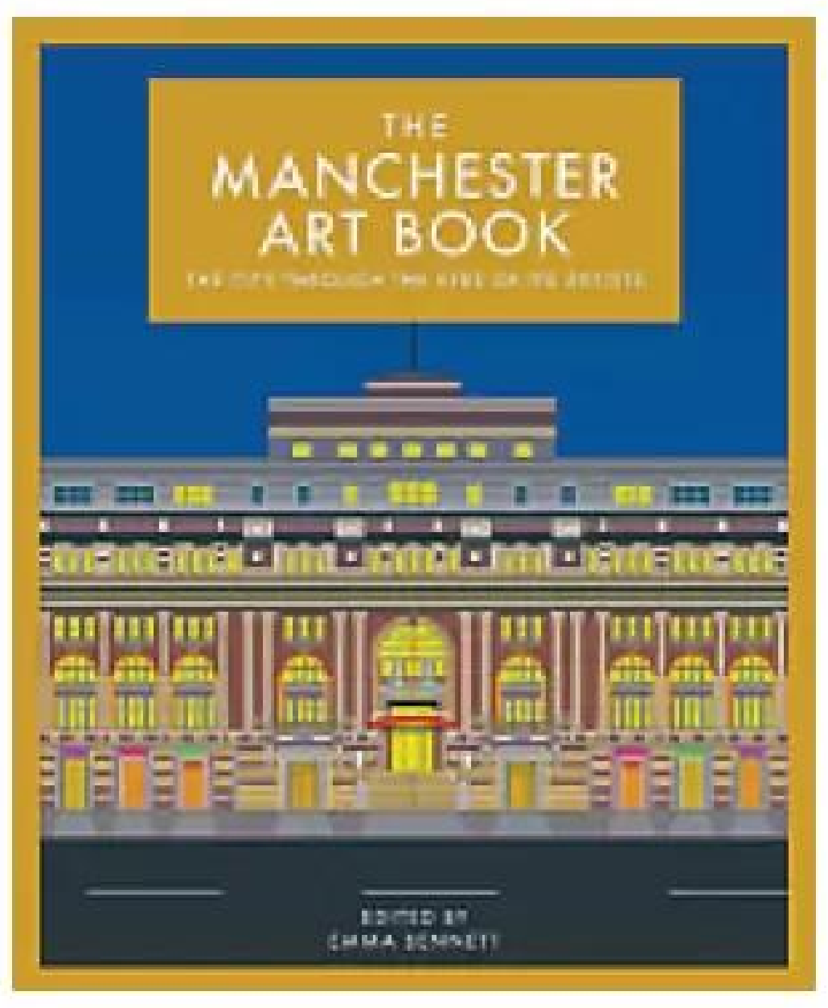
In the 1960s and 1970s, there was some great music that didn't dent the charts or make the musicians popular stars or particularly rich. Fortunately, they presented their music anyway. There were those who appreciated the musicians' approach, live performances and studio recordings. That was good enough.

Subtitled A Short Social & Political History of Rock'n'Roll in South London 1966-1980, Bill MacCormick takes us back to a time when a group of Dulwich College "students" looked beyond their lessons. Forming a band such as Pooh and the Ostrich Feather was seen as being more important.

Our author was listed as being responsible for vocals and bass on a June 1968 programme but he would admit to still learning as far as either was concerned. The Poohs' guitarist will be known to a wider audience, Phil Manzanera (adopting his mother's maiden name rather than Philip Geoffrey Targett-Adams), as he became an integral part of Roxy Music.

Roxy Music would, of course, grace Top of the Pops with their artful pop singles. So would Robert Wyatt, who Bill made an influential and mutually useful friendship with and saw what he believes was the first appearances of Soft Machine (praised by the late John Peel on the radio and few others for their musical shapeshifting combining elements of jazz – a word that still scares many a rock fan).

MacCormick would join Wyatt in a lineup of Matching Mole and make good contributions to Brian Eno and Phil Manzanera solo albums, graduating to Quiet Sun, 801, and Random Hold, before retiring into politics in 1980. These days, he writes some enlightening and eminently readable books, of which this certainly is a great example.



The Manchester Art Book
Edited by Emma Bennett, Herbert Press, hardback, £16.99

The latest in The City Through the Eyes of Its Artists series of books takes us on a tour of the streets of Manchester via vibrant artwork reaching back to the city's rich industrial heritage and bringing us up to date with the modern scene.

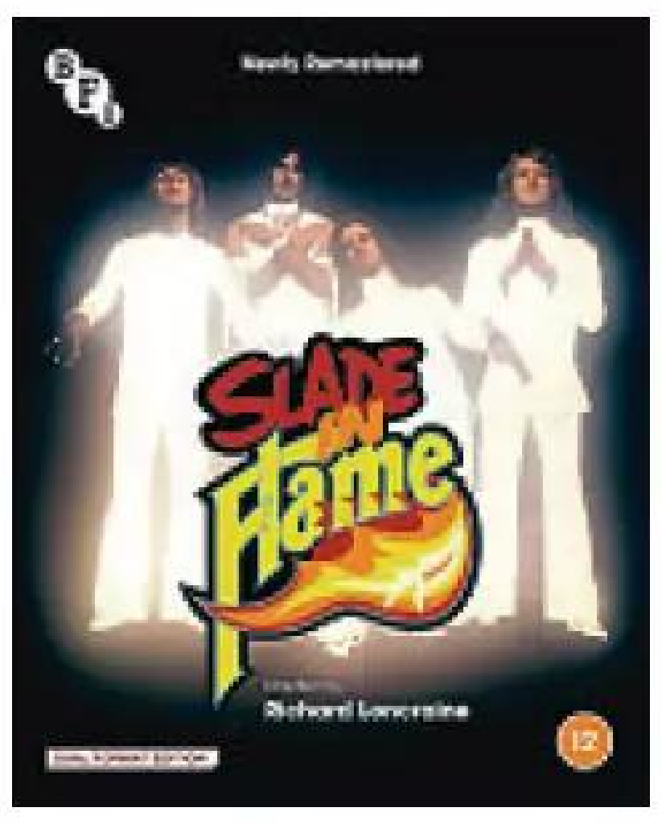
Tram lines reaching across the city with their attendant overhead wires may not be everyone's cup of tea, but through an artist's eyes they can become an integral part of the contemporary scene alongside buildings and infrastructure old and new.

Another transport link that provides inspiration is the network of canals, once providing essential commercial links for commerce and now offering a different viewpoint for leisure use. Likewise, the railways continue to contribute to the urban landscape, with some fine bridges and stations.

Artists were requested to contribute to the book, with more than 50 artists represented offering varied visions of what they find of merit throughout Manchester. A particularly strong visual representation is discovered where contrasting works by different artists are presented as a spread on opposite pages, highlighting individual approaches to a similar scene.

This is a real treat for city visitors and the city map can be used for creating a tour of what appeals to you best. There are also valuable contacts given for the individual artists, allowing readers to follow up and discover more of their work.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT



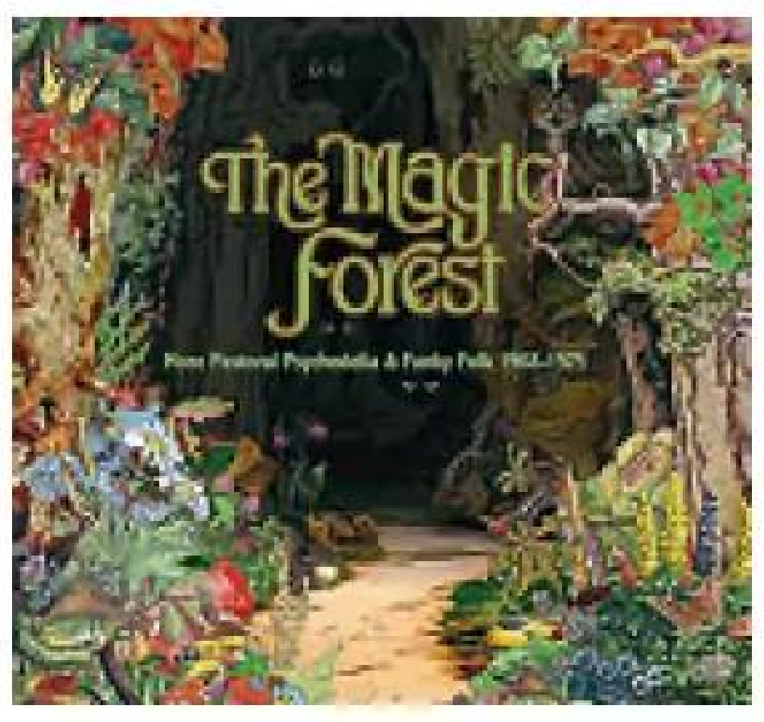
Slade in Flame
Blu-ray/DVD (dual format edition), BFI, BFIB1533, £19.99

To mark the 50th anniversary of the release of Slade in Flame, the BFI has issued a newly remastered version in a dual format edition of the raucous rock'n'roll band attempting "something different" that stands up well to the test of time. When the film, that marked the directing debut of Richard Loncraine, was first shown, some Slade fans were not sure what to make of it.

By contrast, several film critics were more than pleasantly surprised at the strength of the storyline, the performances of both skilled actors and the band members themselves. It was a rocking revelation. While there were elements of the band's personal history within the story, this was more the story of "a band" rather than Slade. Incidents were recalled from other bands, such as Noddy Holder getting locked on stage inside a coffin, a memory related to Screaming Lord Sutch.

In addition to the four band members, a strong cast was assembled including Alan Lake, Tom Conti and Kenneth Colley. A memorable scene on Radio City, that broadcasted from a Thames fort, features Tommy Vance AKA Ricky Storm, while another DJ, Emperor Rosko, later appears as himself.

The plot showed the rise of the fictional band Flame, moving from a basic agent to an upmarket manager, who sold the band as a commodity with no regard for their abilities, artistic talents or feelings. There's a mix of ambition and good times that gives way to darker elements.



The Magic Forest: More Pastoral Psychedelia & Funky Folk 1968-1975
CD x 3 box set, Strawberry, Cherry Records

My first editor was a very generous man. Not only did he give me my big break by offering employment as a trainee journalist, he also used to give me copies of review records that he did not want himself.

In 1972, one of these cast-offs was Swaddling Songs by Irish folk-rockers Mellow Candle. It made no impact on the charts but has grown in stature over the years as an excellent, collectable representative of the genre – I'm glad that I've still got it. Mellow Candle appear on this value-for-money, three-CD package The Magic Forest performing Sheep Season, a typically strong example of their vocal and instrumental creativity.

Another personal favourite of that time was Bridget St John, whose Ask Me No Questions, the title track of her debut album, provides the final gem of this 61-track collection.

The much-mourned Sandy Denny appears as both a solo artist and band member. Next Time Around is from her 1971 album the North Star Grassman and the Ravens, while Fotheringay's the Pond and the Stream represents the short-lived collaboration from 1970.

Other gone-too-soon talents found on here include Alan Hull (a solo track rather than with Lindisfarne), Clifford T Ward, and Kevin Coyne (with Siren).

The Magic Forest title track appears courtesy of Fat Mattress, followed by a song by the Woods Band, plus a song, Fading Light, by the band Forest. Extensive sleeve notes by Richard Norris helps us sort the wood from the trees.

OUT&ABOUT

Places to go, people to see

The Mary, Queen of Scots Casket

The intricately crafted silver casket has been said to be the container for documents used to implicate Mary, Queen of Scots in the murder of her second husband, Lord Darnley.

A rare and intricately crafted silver casket, believed to have belonged to Mary, Queen of Scots, has gone on display at the Smith Art Gallery and Museum, Stirling. On loan from National Museums Scotland, the late 15th or early 16th century French casket has been said to be the container for the so-called "Casket Letters" – documents used to implicate Mary in the murder of her second husband, Lord Darnley. Whether genuine or forged, the letters became a turning point in Mary's fate, and the silver box that may have held them remains one of the most compelling artefacts in Scottish history. This is the first time the casket, which is on display until 31 August, has been shown in Stirling, not far from Stirling Castle, where Mary spent part of her childhood and held court as queen.

01786 471917, smithartgalleryandmuseum.co.uk

We Had One of Those

An attraction that takes visitors on a trip down memory lane, celebrating the cars, gadgets, and everyday objects that shaped life from the 1960s through to the 2000s and beyond, has opened at Beaulieu. We Had One of Those is a hands-on tribute to the vehicles and memories that shaped generations. From the family cars that filled Britain's roads to the pop-culture that defined each era, get up close to an impressive collection of much-loved motoring icons. Visitors are actively encouraged to get involved with the cars; open the doors, sit in the seats, get their hands on the steering wheels and interact with the buttons and dials. Grab the whole family, take a seat inside, and recreate the images of family road trips gone-by.

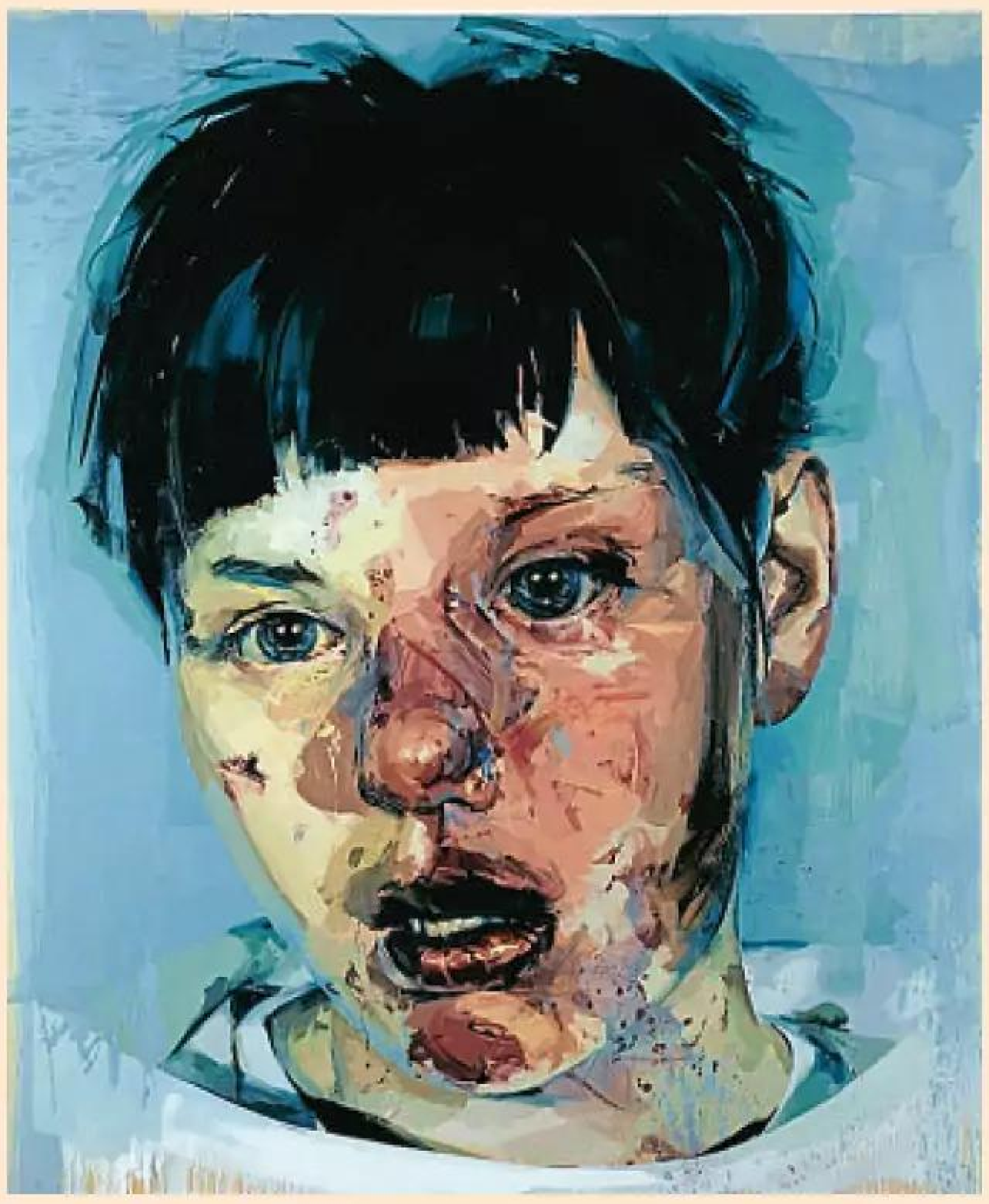
01590 612345, beaulieu.co.uk

We Had One of Those offers the chance to get hands-on with a collection of much-loved motoring icons.

Jenny Saville: The Anatomy of Painting

The first major museum exhibition in the UK dedicated to the work of one of the world's foremost contemporary painters opens at the National Portrait Gallery, London on 20 June 2025. Highlighting key artworks, from monumental oil paintings to smaller scale charcoal drawings, Jenny Saville: The Anatomy of Painting will trace the development of Saville's practice from the 1990s to today. Rising to prominence in the 1990s, following her acclaimed degree show at the Glasgow School of Art, Saville has played a leading role in the reinvigoration of figurative painting, continuing to test its limits while maintaining connections to its history and traditions. Influenced by old and modern masters like Rembrandt, Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud, it is the work of abstract artists – including Willem de Kooning and Cy Twombly – that also captivates Saville. Jenny Saville: The Anatomy of Painting runs until 7 September and, thanks to generous private donor support, visitors aged 25 and under can book free exhibition tickets.

020 7306 0055, npg.org.uk



Stare, 2004-2005 by Jenny Saville, an artist who has played a leading role in the reinvigoration of figurative painting.

Photograph: (Casket) National Museums Scotland, (Jenny Saville) Jenny Saville, Courtesy Gagosian

NOT TO BE MISSED

David Hockney: Bigger & Closer (not smaller & further away)

(Until 29 June)

Journey through David Hockney's artistic career in this immersive exhibition that tells his story over 60 years through six themed chapters, a score by composer Nico Muhly and a commentary by Hockney himself.

Lighthouse, London 0300 303 4216, lightroom.uk

NHS Darkroom: Come As You Really Are

(Until 5 July)

An ongoing project with Sunderland-based photographer and former nurse Johannah Churchill, where staff from Newcastle Hospitals develop their skills and experience in photography. For this iteration, staff have been invited to share the hobbies, crafts or collections that bring them joy, keep them well and provide a creative outlet.

Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland 0191 515 5555, sunderlandculture.org.uk

Standing With Giants

(Until 30 June)

A series of striking life-size silhouettes, inspired by real historic photographs, that pay tribute to the spirit of 8 May 1945 – a day of celebration, remembrance, and reflection.

Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, Oxfordshire 01993 810530, blenheimpalace.com

FOOD: beyond the plate

(Until 29 June)

Exploring the sometimes-controversial histories of hunting, fishing, farming and international trade that have defined the food we eat.

Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, Exeter, Devon 01392 265858, rammuseum.org.uk

A Right Royal Heist

(Until 31 July)

Inspired by objects taken during the English Reformation, local artists have used digital illustration, ceramics, painting and textiles to create unique pieces that express various aspects of the items themselves, the motivation of the donor and the context of the time.

Lincoln Cathedral, Lincoln, Lincolnshire 01522 561600, lincolncathedral.com

ATTRACTION OF THE MONTH

Spread across a 7.5-acre site, which incorporates heritage railway buildings, Hopetown Darlington showcases the town's innovative history. North Road Station Museum features hands-on exhibits and digital storytelling techniques; EXPERIMENT! is an immersive time travel experience ride through passenger rail travel, from 1825 to the present day and into the future; the Carriage Works houses The Stores, home to objects and artefacts relating to the development and operation of railways in the north-east of England, and the Exhibition Hall, where the Railway Pioneers exhibition is held until 22 June. Other attractions include Skerne Bridge, the oldest railway bridge in the world still in continuous operation; and Darlington Locomotive Works, where you can watch staff and volunteers of the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust build the UK's newest steam locomotive, the P2 class No 2007 Prince of Wales.

What to eat: Located in the Goods Shed, the Clocktower Café offers an ever-expanding selection of hot and cold food, along with a range of teas, coffees, hot chocolates, soft drinks and alcohol. Open weekends and school holidays, The Kiosk, which is next to the Wagon Woods railway-theme adventure park, you'll find serves a selection of hot and cold drinks, sweets, and ice-creams. There are also picnic areas within North Road Station Museum, the Goods Yard and near The Kiosk.

Disabled access: Where there are stairs there is also a level access ramp or a lift for wheelchair/ mobility scooter users. Accessible parking is located in Skerne Bridge Car Park and on McNay Street. Accessible toilets are located within the Goods Shed, North Road Station Museum, the Carriage Works and near to The Kiosk. A Changing Places toilet is located within North Road Station Museum. Guide and assistance dogs are welcome with water bowls in the café and on Foundry Green. Large print text and information in other formats are available on request, and hearing loops are fitted at the Goods Shed entrance and the reception desk in the Carriage Works.

HOPETOWN D'TON
SEABURN EAST BOLDON
PELAW
GATESHEAD NEWCASTLE
STATION

How to get there: Located just off the A167, Hopetown Darlington shares a site with North Road (Darlington) railway station, which is served hourly by Northern (0800 200 6060, northernrailway.co.uk) trains on the Saltburn to Bishop Auckland railway line. From here you can connect to the main Darlington railway station (03457 48 49 50, nationalrail.co.uk), which benefits from mainline connections to the rest of Britain. Directly served by frequent bus services from Darlington town centre (0871 200 22 33, travelinenortheast.info), the Hopetown bus stop is located just after the BP garage on High Northgate. Parking (01325 405222, darlington.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/car-parking) is located in Skerne Bridge Car Park on John Street (DL1 1LG) with additional accessible parking on McNay Street (DL3 6SW).

Opening times and admission: Open Tuesday to Sunday, 10am-5pm with last entry at 4pm. Also open on Mondays during the school holidays. Free site admission includes entry to North Road Station Museum, Darlington Locomotive Works viewing gallery and The Stores, as well as the shop, cafe and outdoor areas. Free tickets are required to enter the site, to manage capacity. Some exhibitions, events and activities carry a separate charge. Essential companions and carers can visit the paid-for elements at Hopetown Darlington free of charge. Booking online is recommended to reduce queueing times. However, tickets are also available in person at the welcome desk in the Goods Shed.

Hopetown Darlington, McNay Street, Darlington DL3 6SW (01325 405060, hopetowndarlington.co.uk)

DIARY DATES
GREAT BRITISH EVENTS

🟥 **SOUTH WEST OF ENGLAND**
Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire, Channel Islands

🟦 **SOUTH EAST OF ENGLAND AND LONDON**
Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Middlesex, Surrey, Sussex, Isle of Wight

🟪 **WEST OF ENGLAND**
Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire

🟨 **EAST OF ENGLAND**
Cambridgeshire, Essex, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk

🟧 **MIDLANDS**
Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Rutland, Staffordshire, Warwickshire

⬛ **NORTH OF ENGLAND**
Cheshire, County Durham, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, Yorkshire, Isle of Man

🟥 **WALES**

🟦 **SCOTLAND**

🟩 **NORTHERN IRELAND**

SOUTH WEST OF ENGLAND

03 HISTORICAL WALK: FLOATING HARBOUR (10.30AM-1PM)

Join guides for a tour of Bristol harbour, exploring its industrial and maritime heritage and modern regeneration. Walk-ins welcome on the day if space available.
M-Shed, Bristol
0117 352 6600, bristolmuseums.org.uk/m-shed

05-08 SUMMER DIESEL FESTIVAL 2025

Featuring a wide selection of locomotives, including visiting and home fleet locos, on an intensive timetable operating on all four days with a mixed traction day on the Sunday.
West Somerset Railway, Minehead, Somerset
01643 704996, west-somerset-railway.co.uk

14-15 LYME REGIS FOSSIL FESTIVAL

Featuring a variety of activities, including fossil walks, interactive exhibits, expert talks, guided boat trips, performance and art workshops. Free admission. No ticket required.
Lyme Regis, Dorset
fossilfestival.com

21-22 TAUNTON GARRISON – THE MONMOUTH REBELLION (10AM-4PM)

Taunton Garrison brings history to life with a living history camp, including live musket firing and weapon demonstrations. No booking required. Free event (admission applies).
Dunster Castle and Watermill, Dunster, Minehead, Somerset
01643 821314, nationaltrust.org.uk/dunster-castle-and-watermill

28 REME MUSEUM EXTRAVAGANZA 2025

A fun-filled open day throughout the entire grounds, including galleries and garden spaces, combining the best parts of previous Armed Forces Day events with a summer fete.
REME Museum, Chippenham, Wiltshire
01249 894869, rememuseum.org.uk

SOUTH EAST OF ENGLAND AND LONDON

01 GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION (10AM)

Join a steam-up party to celebrate 50 years of the railway with steam engine passenger rides, and all locomotives, vehicles and engines on display in the engine shed.
Bredgar and Wormshill Light Railway, Sittingbourne, Kent
01622 884254, bwlr.co.uk

08 ROUTE 418 HERITAGE DAY (10AM-5PM)

Ride free on heritage buses dating from the 1950s to 1970s in service on London bus route 418 (Epsom and Kingston). No need to book, just put your hand out at any route 418 stop.
London Bus Museum, Weybridge, Surrey
01932 837994, londonbusmuseum.com

14-15 EMERGENCY SERVICES & FATHER'S DAY (10AM-4.30PM)

See a wide collection of emergency vehicles, vintage and modern, and watch demonstrations from West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service. Dads get free entry. Booking requested.
Amberley Museum, Near Arundel, West Sussex
01798 831370, amberleymuseum.co.uk

21-22 THE TILFORD GARDEN SHOW

Featuring a lineup of trade stands, blacksmiths with bespoke garden sculpture, willow weavers and natural fencing, and garden structures for storage and leisure.
Rural Life Living Museum, Tilford, Farnham, Surrey
01252 795571, rural-life.org.uk

29 NATIONAL AUSTIN SEVEN RALLY AT BEAULIEU (10AM-5PM)

Join the Pre-War Austin Seven Club as it celebrates one of the world's best-loved people's cars with activities, including an Austin autojumble, driving skills tests and concours contest.
National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, Hampshire
01590 612345, beaulieu.co.uk

WEST OF ENGLAND

05 MIDWEEK RAMBLE – WINDMILL HILL NATURE RESERVE (10AM-1PM)

Explore Windmill Hill nature reserve on this summer walk. Please keep dogs on a lead. Parking limited so booking essential.
Windmill Hill, near North Littleton, Evesham, Worcestershire
worcswildlifetrust.co.uk

08 THE COSFORD AIR SHOW 2025

Meet historic icons in the vintage village, discover a range of memorabilia, and feel the power as awesome aircraft fly overhead. Museum admission by air show ticket only.
RAF Museum Midlands, Cosford, Shropshire
01902 376200, rafmuseum.org.uk/midlands

13-15 REAL ALE FESTIVAL 2025 (9AM-5PM)

Experience the magic of yesteryear with a scenic journey aboard beautifully restored steam trains as you sip and savour from a curated selection of real ales crafted by local breweries.
Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire
01242 621405, gwsr.com

22 CLASSIC TRANSPORT DAY

A display of classic cars, buses, lorries, motorcycles and traction engines at Spring Village, Horsehay and Dawley stations. Free parking at Horsehay industrial estate.
Telford Steam Railway, Telford, Shropshire
telfordsteamrailway.co.uk

27-29 BLENHEIM PALACE FLOWER SHOW

Experience extraordinary floral displays that showcase the beauty and diversity of horticulture. Booking essential.
Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, Oxfordshire
01993 810530, blenheimpalace.com

EAST OF ENGLAND

01 BIG SUNDAY (10.30AM-12.30PM)

Drop in on first Sunday of each month to look, explore, draw and more with a warm welcome from the Sainsbury Centre learning team. Suitable for all ages. Free. No need to book.
Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia, Norwich, Norfolk
01603 593199, sainsburycentre.ac.uk

07 FLYING DAYS: D-DAY

Experience the story of D-day, as it is retold through flying aircraft at the historic Duxford site. Booking essential.
IWM Duxford, Duxford, Cambridgeshire
020 7416 5000, iwm.org.uk/visits/iwm-duxford

13-15 RAILS & ALES

An on-track celebration of steam and diesel power coupled with a showcase of Norfolk's brewing traditions. Ride behind steam engines, diesel locomotives, diesel railcars and choose from local ales and ciders.
North Norfolk Railway, Sheringham, Norfolk
01263 820800, nnrailway.co.uk

21-22 & 28-29 TUDOR MIDSUMMER (11AM-5PM)

Step back in time almost 500 years to

experience everyday life in Tudor Suffolk. See, hear, touch and smell 16th century England brought to life by more than 200 skilled living historians.
Kentwell Hall, Sudbury, Suffolk
01787 310207, kentwell.co.uk

29 BASTON CAR & BIKE SHOW

A fun day out for all the family with vehicles on show including vintage, classic, road, race, sports, customised, commercial and more. Plus, live music, entertainment, food and drink.
Grimsthorpe Castle, Park and Gardens, Bourne, Lincolnshire
01778 591205, grimsthorpe.co.uk

MIDLANDS

07-08 RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL

Free event held along Leicester's waterways featuring live music, street performers, and delicious food from around the world. A great place to spend a day out with the family.
Bede Park, Mile Straight, Western Boulevard & Castle Gardens, Leicester, Leicestershire
0116 454 3600, facebook.com/leicesterfestivals, visitleicester.info

13-15 CELEBRATING JANE AUSTEN

Celebrating Jane Austen's 250th birthday, and the 20th anniversary of Chatsworth becoming Pemberley for Joe Wright's 2005 film adaptation of Pride and Prejudice.
Chatsworth, Bakewell, Derbyshire
01246 565300, chatsworth.org

14-15 CLASSIC & VINTAGE COMMERCIAL SHOW (10AM-4PM)

Celebrating the heavy vehicles that used to roll along our roads, from Ford Transits and Morris Minors to heavier lorries such as AECs, ERFs, Fodens and Leylands.
British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwick, Warwickshire
01926 895300, britishmotormuseum.co.uk

21 WINDRUSH DAY (10AM-5PM)

Marking the anniversary of the arrival of HMT Empire Windrush on 22 June 1948 and showcasing black British contribution to the Black Country and the wider UK.
Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, West Midlands
0121 557 9643, bclm.co.uk

28-29 MIDLANDS FIRE & RESCUE SHOW (10AM-4PM)

Catch live demonstrations of rescues in various scenarios by visiting experts. Plus, all the usual offerings from unlimited train rides and entry into the museum to woodland walks.
Statfold Country Park, Tamworth, Staffordshire
01827 830389, statfold.com

NORTH OF ENGLAND

01 SHEEP SHEARING DEMONSTRATIONS (11AM, 1PM, 2PM)

Go to the Rare Breed Farm Park to watch some live sheep shearing with shepherd, Rich. Laura will demonstrate spinning and rug making with sheep wool.
Sledmere House, Driffield, East Yorkshire
01377 236637, sledmerehouse.com

08 HERITAGE TRAIN RIDES

Enjoy a four-mile return trip (35-40 minutes) following the route of the coal trains from the collieries to the River Tyne behind a vintage locomotive in 1950s passenger carriages.
Stephenson Steam Railway, North Shields, Tyne & Wear
0191 277 7135, stephensonsteamrailway.org.uk

14-15 MORRIS CAR RALLY 2025

See the Morris Car Club with a display of pre-1939 vehicles.
Beamish Museum, Beamish, Stanley, County Durham
0191 370 4000, beamish.org.uk

19-21 SONG CITY SAFARI

Discover how Liverpool became the pop capital of the world in a celebration of the city's creative entertainers, musicians and so much more. Booking recommended.
Museum of Liverpool, Pier Head, Liverpool
0151 478 4545, liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/museum-of-liverpool

28-29 TRACTORS WEEKEND (10.30AM-4.30PM)

Featuring a display of vintage tractors and farm machinery. On the Saturday only there will also be a display of vintage cars by the East Yorkshire Thoroughbred Car Club.
Trolleybus Museum at Sandtoft, Doncaster, South Yorkshire
01724 711846, sandtoft.org/wp

WALES

07 WILDFLOWER DAY

Celebrate the beauty and importance of wildflowers, the pollinators that depend on them and the ecosystems that they support. Free with admission.
National Botanic Garden of Wales, Llanarthne, Carmarthenshire
01558 667177, botanicgarden.wales

10 BEHIND THE SCENES: SOME RECENT PREHISTORIC TREASURE FINDS FROM WALES (2PM)

Led by curator and archaeologist Adam Gwilt, this is a chance to see some bronze age and iron age treasure finds recently added to the national collection. Meet at the ticketing desk.
National Museum Cardiff, Cathays Park, Cardiff
0300 111 2 333, museum.wales/cardiff

19 CASTELL CAERNARFON TOURS (11-11.45AM, 3-3.45PM)

Join a custodian for a tour of Castell Caernarfon. Normal admission, plus additional £5 per person. Tours available on a first-come, first-served basis.
Castell Caernarfon, Caernarfon, Gwynedd
0300 025 2239, cadw.gov.wales

21 BIG PIT'S BIG BASH (10AM)

A day full of music, food and fun with live music as well as family activities and crafts. Take the Underground Tour, explore the Pithead Baths exhibition and more. Free event.
Big Pit National Coal Museum, Blaenavon, Torfaen
0300 111 2 333, museum.wales/bigpit

28 HAVE-A-GO ARCHERY AND SWORD SCHOOL (10AM-4PM)

Do you have what it takes to be a medieval knight or archer? Enrol in the Sword School and step up to the archery range. All visitors can try both activities once, at no extra charge.
Chepstow Castle, Chepstow, Monmouthshire
0300 025 2239, cadw.gov.wales

SCOTLAND

01 SUPER SUNDAY – COMIC-ON THE BUSES (11AM-4.30PM)

With a star-studded line-up of fantasy and sci-fi characters, this is a fusion of classic transport and imagination. Awards are up for grabs in the cosplay competition, so dress to impress.
Bridgeton Bus Garage, Glasgow
0141 554 0544, gvvt.org

07-08 MEDIEVAL WEEKEND (NOON-4PM)

Wander through the living history camp to experience life in medieval times.
Dirleton Castle, Dirleton, North Berwick, East Lothian
0131 668 8885, historicenvironment.scot

14 LEITH FESTIVAL OPEN DAY (11AM-4PM)

Take a self-guided tour, watch a film about Leith's maritime history and see the fascinating objects that tell stories of life at sea. Free and no booking required.
Trinity House, Leith, Edinburgh
0131 668 8600, historicenvironment.scot

19-22 ROYAL HIGHLAND SHOW 2025

Showcasing the best of food, farming and rural life, the show has something for everyone, from competitions to shopping, live music and tasty food and drinks.
Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston, Edinburgh
0131 335 6200, royalhighlandshow.org

28 SCOTTISH JAGUAR ENTHUSIASTS' DAY 2025

See a range of Jaguar cars through the decades, from the 1950s up to the present day, brought to you by Scotland's Jaguar Enthusiasts' clubs. Free entry.
Riverside Museum, Pointhouse Place, Glasgow
0141 287 2720, glasgowlife.org.uk/museums/venues/riverside-museum

NORTHERN IRELAND

07 SPRING FAIR (NOON-4PM)

Craft fair, plants and books for sale, bouncy castle and crafts for children, sausage sizzle, plus tours of the Tea Barn House and exhibition.
The Ballance House, Glenavy, County Antrim
theballancehouse.com

18 BEHIND THE SCENES: TRANSPORT STORE TOUR (6.30-7.30PM)

See inside this treasure trove of automotive, aeronautic and industrial collections that highlight the social, industrial, and sporting history of this part of the world.
Ulster Transport Museum, Cultra, Holywood, County Down
028 9042 8428, ulstertransportmuseum.org

● Details correct at time of going to press – please confirm with event organisers before travelling.

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

Twenty Questions

1. Stanley Baldwin.
2. Stuart Sutcliffe who was born on 23 June 1940.
3. David Dundas who was born on 2 June 1945.
4. Nicola Pagett who was born on 15 June 1945.
5. Brazil.
6. Val McDermid who was born on 4 June 1955.
7. Mick Jones who was born on 26 June 1955.
8. Mick Hucknall who was born on 8 June 1960.
9. Damien Hirst who was born on 7 June 1965.
10. Laurence Olivier.
11. Helen Baxendale who was born on 7 June 1970.
12. Terence Fisher who died on 18 June 1980.
13. A View to a Kill.
14. Richard Greene who died on 1 June 1985.
15. Sir Rex Harrison who died on 2 June 1990.
16. Siegfried Farnon.
17. David Tomlinson who died on 24 June 2000.
18. Richard Whiteley who died on 26 June 2005.
19. Frank Sidebottom.
20. Charles Kennedy.

And I quote…

The Range Rover, which was launched in June 1970.

What is it?

An ice-cream wafer maker.

Dialect Detective

1b, 2b, 3a, 4a

R	A	D	I	O	■	T	I	M	E	S
A	■	O	■	M	■	E	■	A	■	H
B	U	D	■	A	I	N	T	R	E	E
B	■	D	■	R	■	N	■	■	■	E
I	T	E	M	■	W	I	L	S	O	N
■	■	R	■	C	■	S	■	P	■	■
B	L	Y	T	O	N	■	P	E	R	M
O	■	■	■	L	■	S	■	N	■	O
M	U	R	D	O	C	H	■	C	U	P
B	■	A	■	U	■	A	■	E	■	E
S	U	G	A	R	■	W	O	R	L	D

Treasures in the Attic

1. Sun-Fun rapid inflator £10, 2. Torbay pottery jug £20,
3. Dinky Toys prewar caravan £150/postwar £15, 4. Coot Club badge £5,
5. Scenic railway postcard £5, 6. I-SPY At the Seaside book £8,
7. Spot Rock card £5, 8. STAR ITEM Lighthouse toffee tin £300,
9. Tinplate bucket £85, 10. Skegness booklet £10,
11. Dinky Toys motor coaches £40 each, 12. Toffee Rex tin £60.

CLASSIFIEDS

Self-catering holiday accommodation
THE OLD STATION
The Old Station, Allerston, North Yorkshire
This former station ticket office has been carefully renovated and converted into a **spacious** two bedroomed cottage, each with a walk-in shower. Lounge and dining area contains several restored period features. There is a wood burning stove in the original fireplace and underfloor heating throughout. Kitchen includes freezer, dishwasher and washer dryer.
Contact **01723 859024 • www.theoldstationallerston.co.uk**

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Peter Maryniak
27 Stowe Walk,
Parklands,
Northampton NN3 6EE
01604 452156
peter.maryniak27@outlook.com

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*Please note: This offer applies to NEW customers ONLY

Abingdon Air & Country Show

Saturday 14th June, 10am - 4.30pm

Tickets and more information from:
www.abingdonairandcountry.co.uk

The Broyle Country Show

SAT 28TH & SUN 29TH JUNE 2025
FREE Car Park
Upper Lodge Farm, Ringmer, BN8 5AP
10am to 5pm

Supporting Local Charities

Late night screening of 1 film on Friday & Saturday

BUY TICKETS ONLINE

Admissions: Adults - £9.00 Children - £5 Under 5 - FREE Senior citizen - £7.00 Family - £22.00

North Rode Vintage Rally

7th & 8th June 2025

Auction on 7th June @ 11am

at Station Road, Bosley (CW12 2PB) near Congleton, Cheshire

FUN FOR ALL THE FAMILY

Contact Nigel Moss 07759 603168 / 01625 614552 nigelmoss1962gmail.com

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BLOXHAM STEAM AND COUNTRY FAIR

28|29 JUNE 2025

Issue 1 4d

Peak Rail Echo

8TH MAY 1945

GERMANY SURRENDERS

Peak Rail 1940's Event

5TH & 6TH JULY 2025

PEAK RAIL, ROWSLEY SOUTH STATION, HARRISON WAY, DE4 2LF

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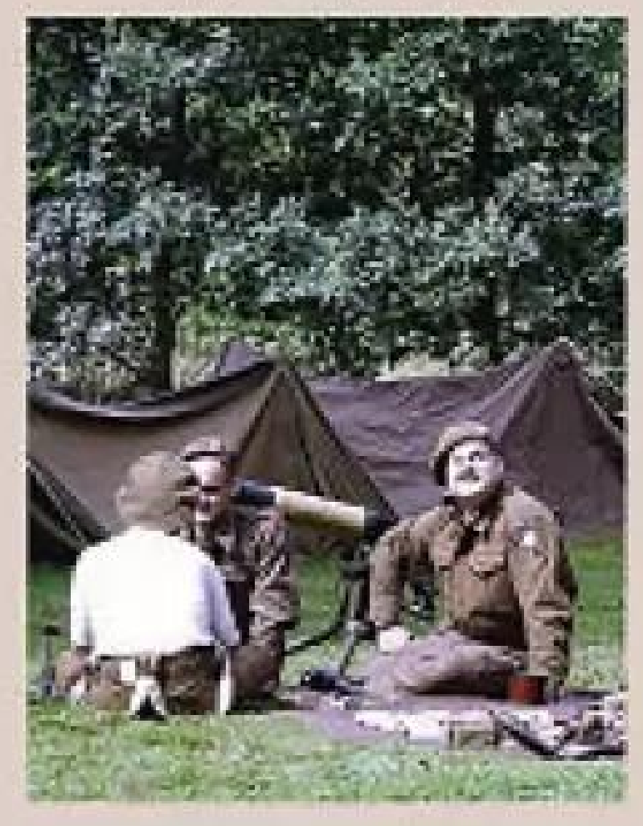

Peace

Allied troops move into Germany

TICKETS

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PEAK RAIL

MORE INFORMATION & TICKETS AT PEAKRAIL.CO.UK

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Upcoming Events

PAST TIMES

Saturday 21st - Sunday 22nd June

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13TH, 14TH, AND 15TH JUNE 2025

- STEAM TRAIN RIDES
- LIVING HISTORY DISPLAYS
- VINTAGE STALLS
- 1940S ENTERTAINMENT

VISIT WWW.E-V-R.COM/1940S FOR MORE INFO AND ADVANCE TICKETS

BACK IN TIME WITH COLIN BAKER

BoB's very own Time Lord says farewell to a former neighbour, and recalls a friendship with a heart-throb, learning to dance, and avoiding "Henleh" during the regatta

In the early 1960s, I joined an amateur drama group in North Manchester on the same day as a young man called Malcolm Roberts, who was celebrated in last month's magazine. We became firm friends, even though he was impossibly good looking and could sing like a dream and so got all the young lead roles in the annual musical production, starting with Lt Cable, the lead, in South Pacific in which I played a geeky, bespectacled sailor, who had to speak some Latin, a role I got because I was the only cast member who had studied Latin at school. Malcolm lived only a mile or so from me and I often used to walk over to visit him and his parents in Moston with my dalmatian, Barney.

With our friend Adrian, we used to go every Friday to Ted and Phyllis Chiltern's Dance Hall in Cheetham Hill, Manchester where we learned to foxtrot, quick step and tango followed by an hour of putting our newly learned steps into practice with the young ladies who sat on the other side of the dance hall, waiting with varying degrees of enthusiasm to be invited to dance. There can be very few of my generation who do not remember with a mixture of fear, dread and excitement the process of getting out of the chairs that lined the dance hall to cross the acres of wooden flooring that separated us from… girls. In my case hoping that Malcolm didn't ask the one I liked the look of first. He usually did.

Adrian was a good-looking chap too. In fact, if you have ever seen the Pathé News film of the famous Beatles concert in Ardwick, Manchester in 1963 you will have seen a close up of policeman Adrian briefly grooving to the rhythm of Twist and Shout amid a crowd of hysterical, screaming girls.

Malcolm was clearly destined for great things; he was headhunted by other local amateur groups to play Tony in West Side Story, after which Lionel Bart whisked him off to London to appear in Maggie May and we lost touch, but for three or four years I saw a lot of them both and not just because I was the only one with a car. At least I think that wasn't the only reason.

I live not far from Henley and my oldest daughter went to primary school there. It became quite busy as you might expect during the period of the Regatta every summer and my wife remembers an occasion when she had been obliged to park some way away from the school and was walking there with our daughter when a Rolls-Royce stopped beside them and decanted two immaculately dressed and coiffed ladies on to the pavement.

One of them glanced at the vista before her and declared in faultless tones that she had previously been unaware that "Henleh" was "on the river". It has since become a place to avoid for locals when the tents spring up along the Thames every summer. Much as seaside towns batten down the hatches during the summer holidays. But in both cases, the traders and hostelries benefit in much the same way as pantomime is a banker that boosts theatres' resources during the leaner months.

I was very sad to learn that we have lost Jean Marsh whom I had met several times locally when she lived only a few miles from me. A charming and clever lady, she had a very dry sense of humour and wore her years very lightly.

Singer Malcolm Roberts, second left, a life-long Manchester City supporter, pictured in 1974 with the club's Willie Donachie, Mike Doyle and Rodney Marsh.

Photograph: ANL/Shutterstock

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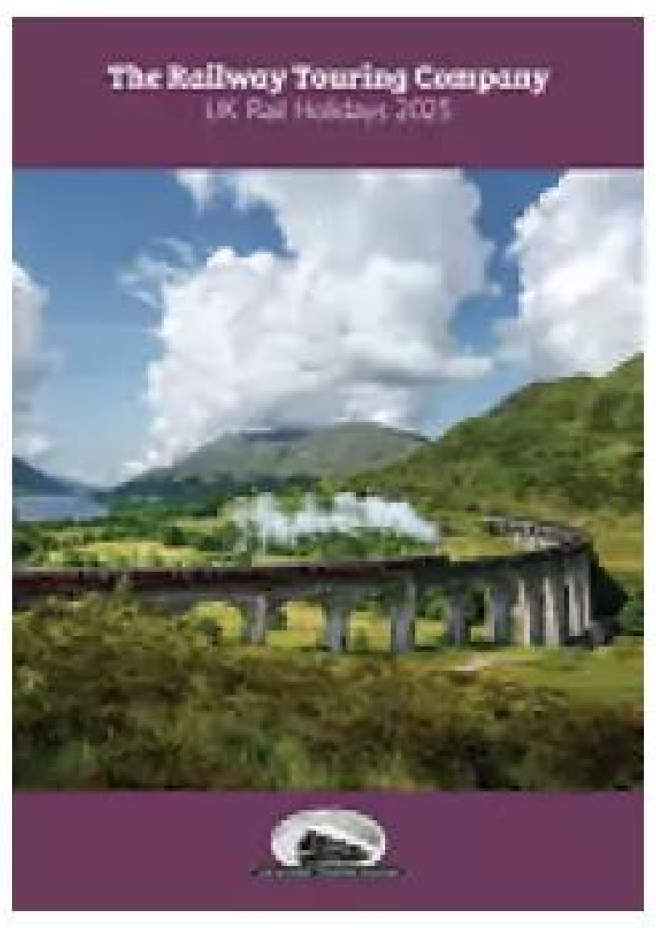

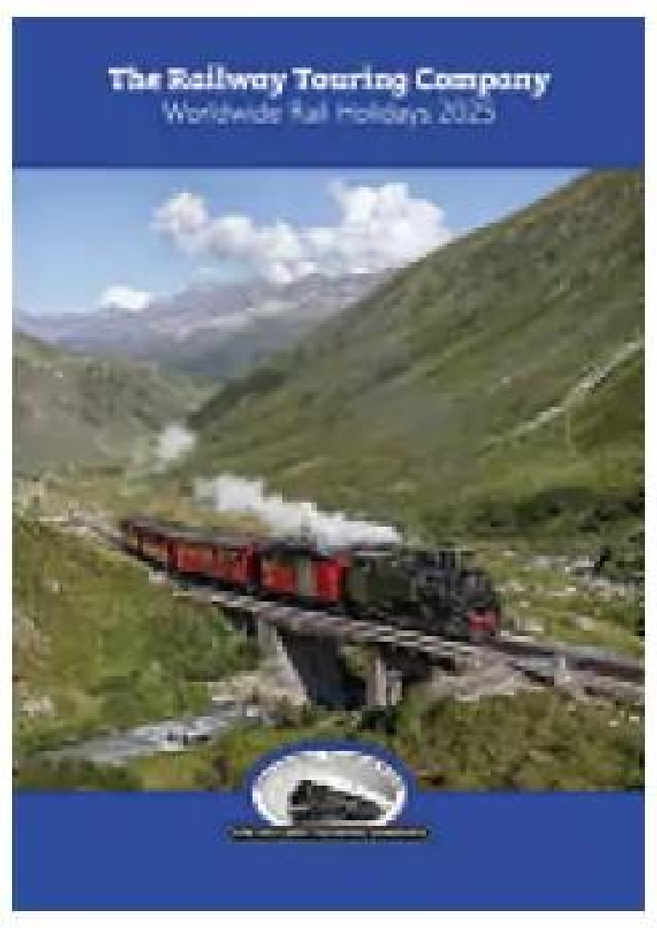

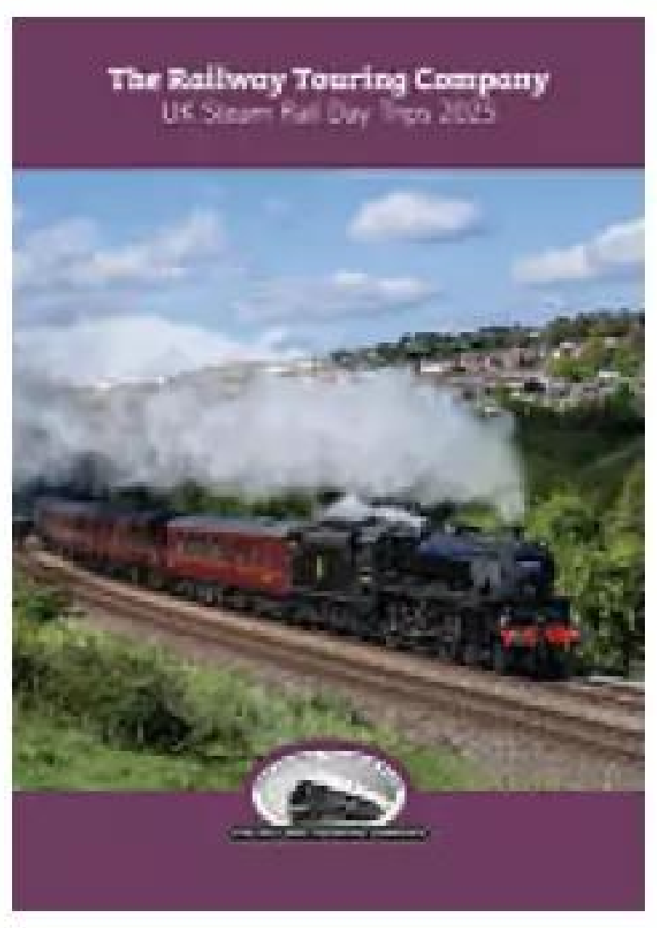

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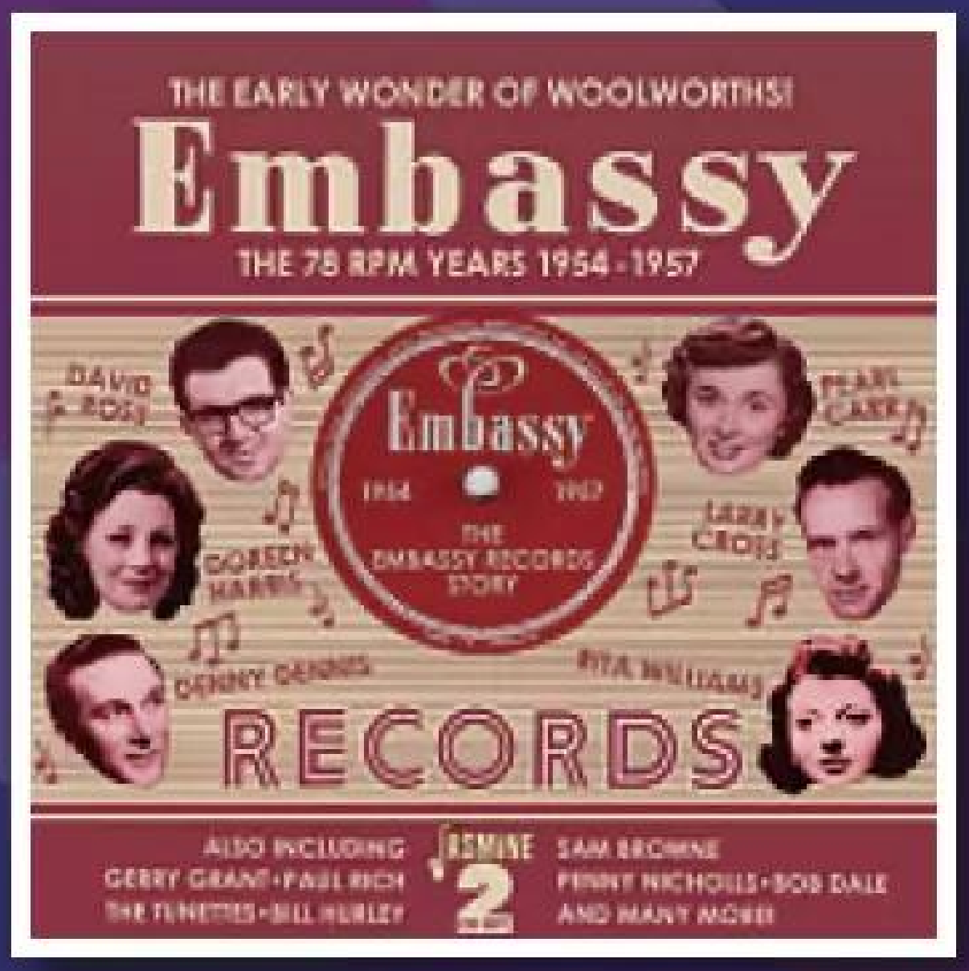
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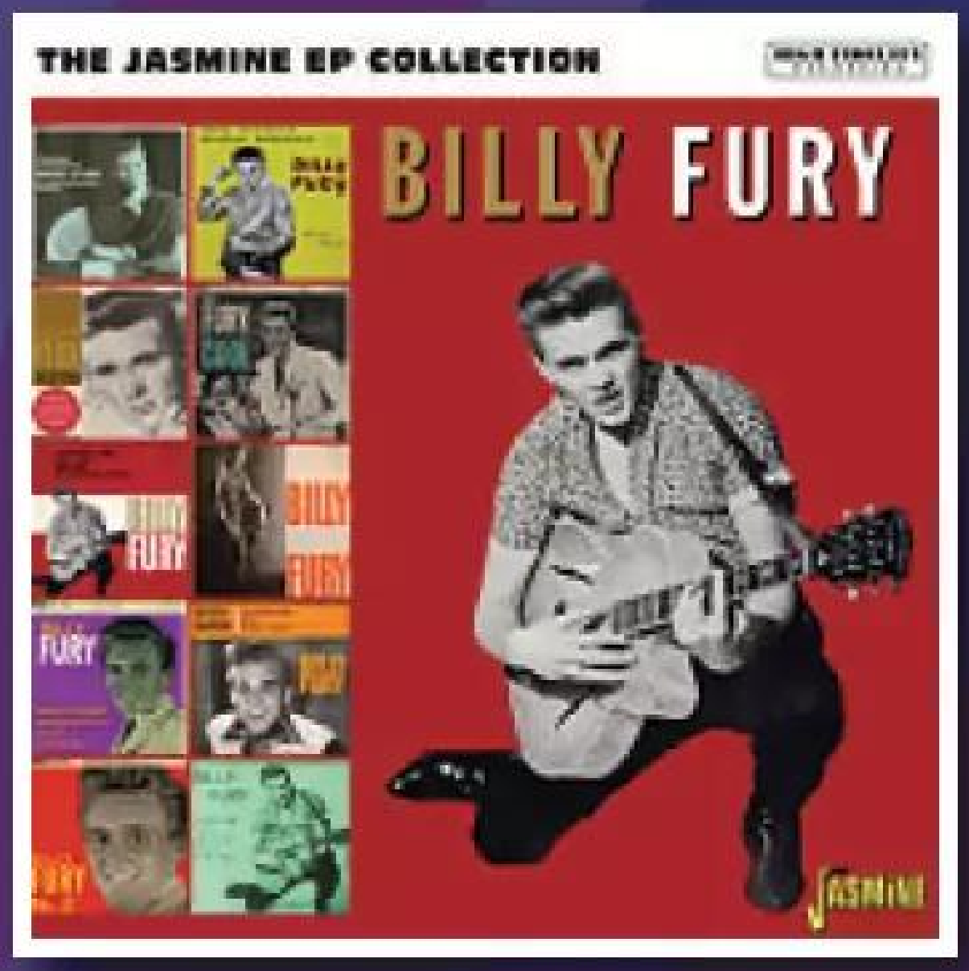
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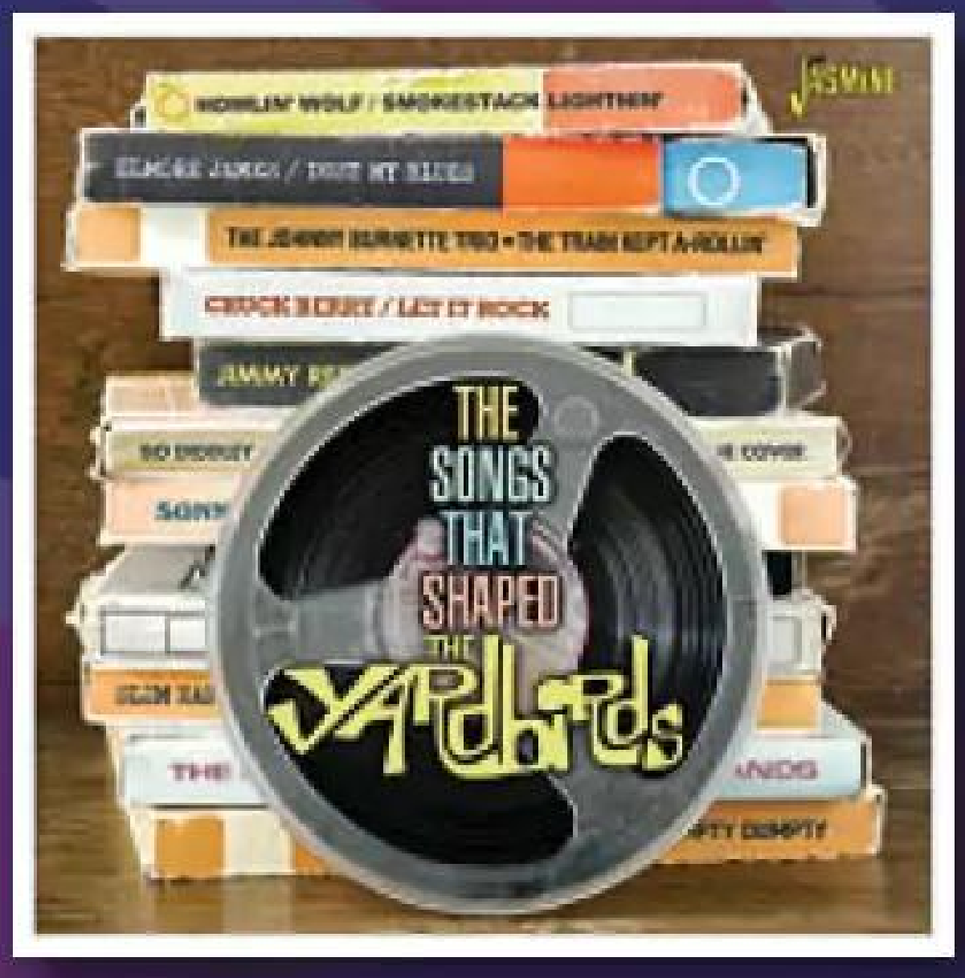
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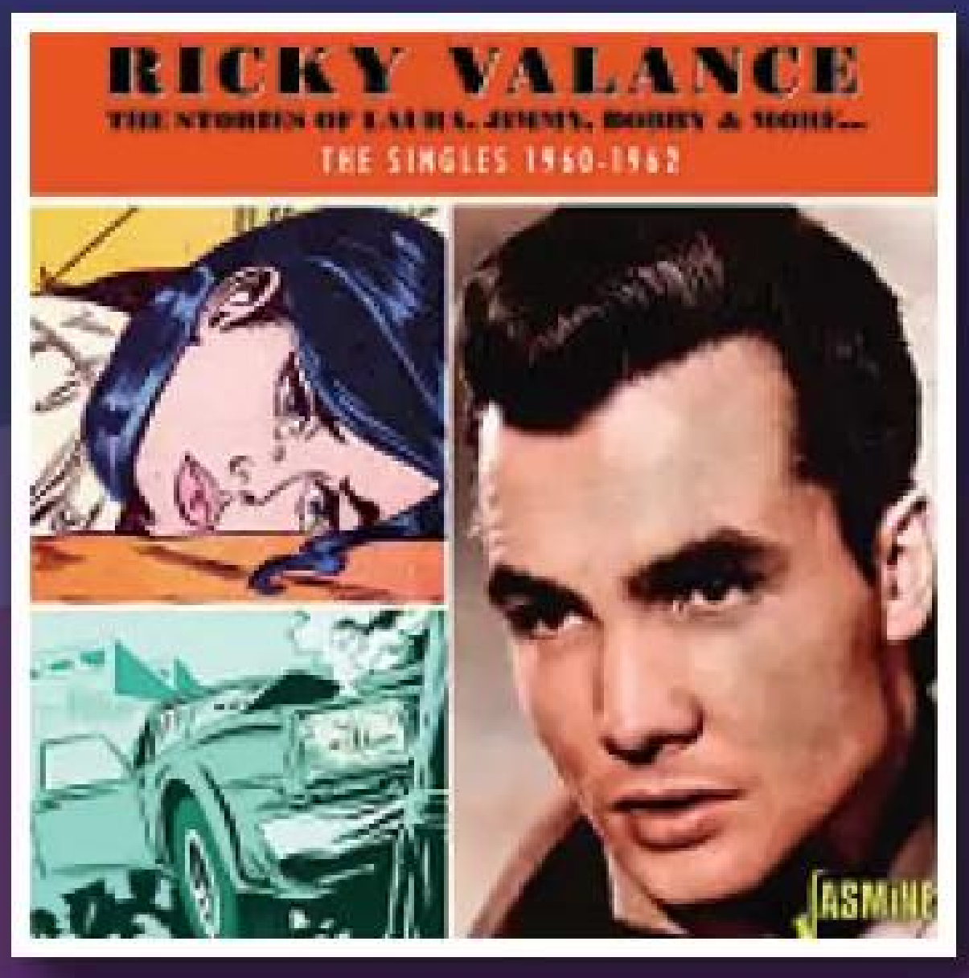
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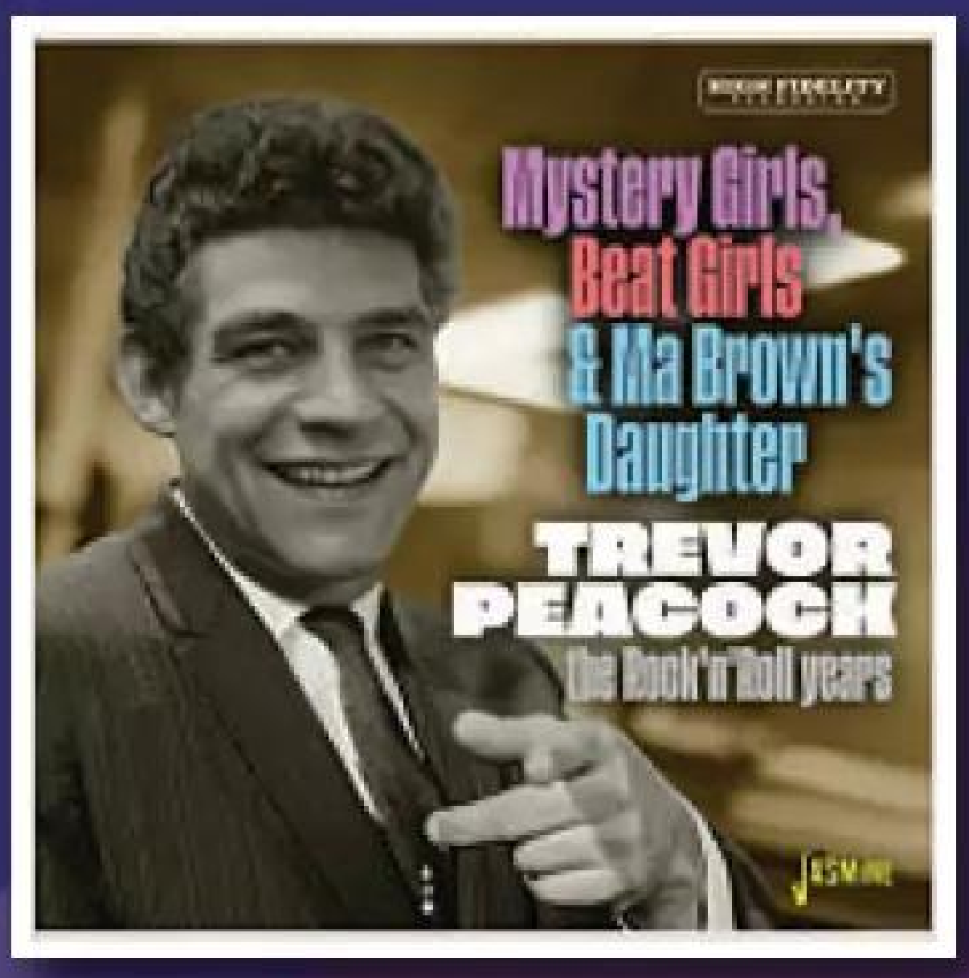
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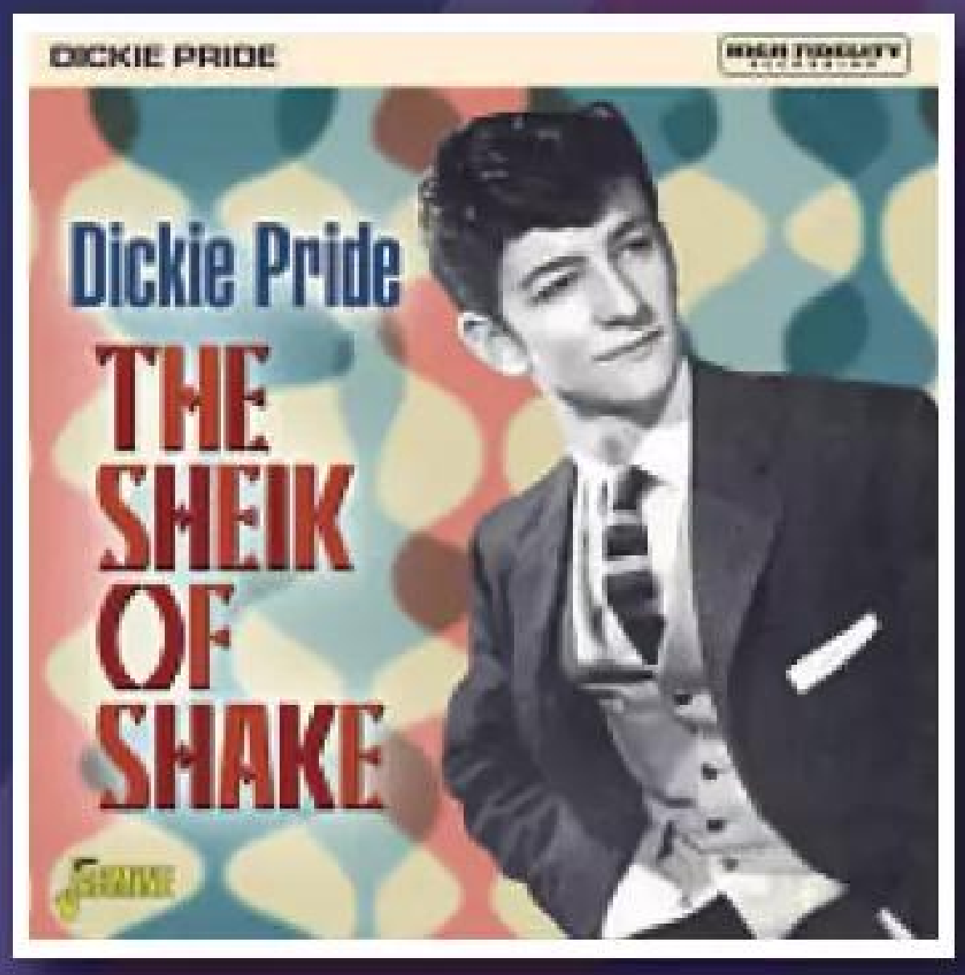
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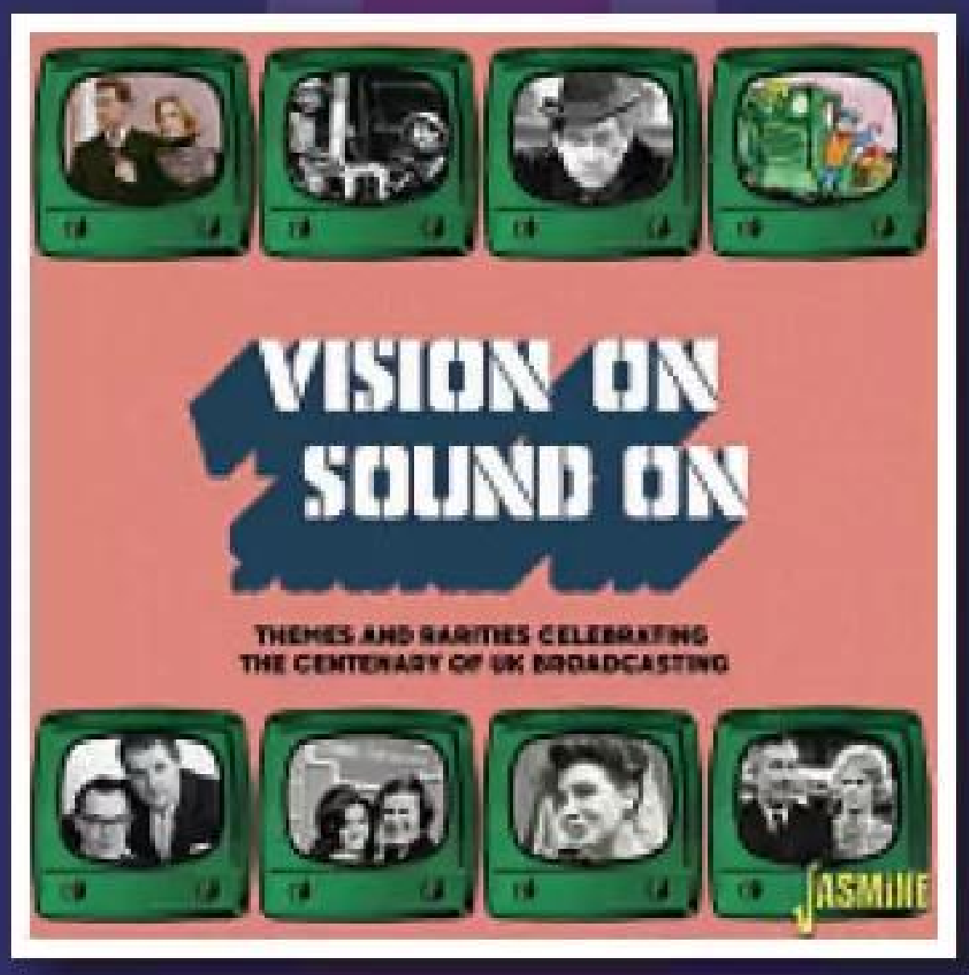
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